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THE METAMORPHOSES OR GOLDEN ASS OF APULEIUS OF MADAURA

TRANSLATED

By H. E. BUTLER

FELLOW OF NEW COLLEGE

VOL. I

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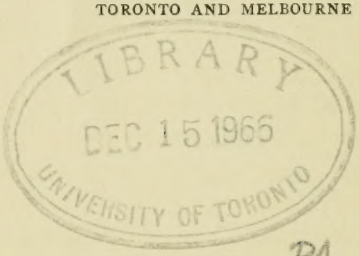

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PREFACE

As a basis for this translation I have used the excellent text by Helm published by Messrs. Teubner in their series of Classical Texts, and I am indebted to them for their permission to make such use of it. On rare occasions when I have diverged from the text, I have indicated in a footnote the reading preferred. Not a few expurgations have been necessary, and in one case, where the offending passage is one on which the plot actually turns, it has been necessary to rewrite the story to the extent of a few lines of print. I can only trust that such a liberty may not be regarded as unwarrantable, and on the other hand that nothing has been retained in the translation which can reasonably cause offence. The authorities to whom I am chiefly indebted are duly mentioned in the Introduction. I wish, however, specially to record my debt to Hildebrand's commentary, and also to a very limited extent to the vivacious French translation by Victor Bétolaud, which has been of occasional service in indicating the best method of breaking up the almost interminable sentences in which Apuleius not infrequently indulges. I have confined myself in the Introduction to the very

briefest statement of the difficult problems as to the origins of the main plot and the various episodes of the romance. If this statement should seem unduly scanty, my excuse must be that I hope to deal with those problems more fully at some future date. I have added a few brief notes. They might have been almost indefinitely multiplied. I have confined myself to those which seemed most necessary. For a brief outline of the life of Apuleius I must refer the reader to the Introduction to my translation of the *Apologia* and *Florida* (Clarendon Press, 1909).

H. E. BUTLER.

NEW COLLEGE,
1909.

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INTRODUCTION

THE *Metamorphoses*, better known as the *Golden Ass* of Apuleius, is, with the exception of the fragment of the *Satyricon* of Petronius, the sole surviving example of the Latin novel. Nor is that all. Save for a Greek version of the same tale, the *Lucius or the Ass*, attributed to Lucian, it is unique in type as well as in language. Not a few erotic romances by Greek authors have been preserved to us, of which the most famous is the *Daphnis and Chloe* of Longus. But these works are on the whole of a very different character. The erotic portions of Apuleius do, it is true, present many resemblances to the treatment of love-scenes in the Greek novelists; rhetoric and picturesque description pervade the works of both. But there the resemblance ceases. Love is not the central motive of the *Golden Ass*, being entirely episodic, while, though the Greek novelists are by no means to be disregarded as stylists, in none of them does style pure and simple contribute so largely to the effectiveness of the work. Apuleius wrote in a style which, by whatever canons it be judged, was intrinsically bad. Few writers in any language have pushed preciosity to such extravagance, or shown such studious care in the avoidance of natural and direct expression. It has been said of Tacitus that in his works the language itself is touched with decay. What then shall we say

of the style of Apuleius, writing not more than a generation later? The ruin seems complete. Alike in diction and syntax we seem to move in a new world. The worst faults of Asiatic oratory run riot, while archaism and neologism go hand in hand to produce bizarre effects of an almost oriental gorgeousness. Narrative and dialogue alike are written in the same stilted style, and tautology is carried to such an extent that were it not for the richness of the colouring it would be positively wearisome. And yet the general effect is surprisingly successful. The story is one which almost requires a bizarre presentation. We never move in a real world. At no point in the tale are we more than a handsbreadth away from the miraculous. The action is laid primarily in Thessaly, the fabulous home of witchcraft, and if we are permitted for a while to forget the existence of the black art, it is to hear wild tales of brigandage and murder,[1] to wander in the regions of fairyland with Cupid and Psyche, or to be half-admitted to the mysteries of Isis and Osiris. As a result, there are really but few occasions where the style is felt as inappropriate. The fantastic elaboration of description may perhaps ring false when applied to the depiction of the works of art in the house of the hero's kinswoman Byrrena, but it is assuredly in place when directed to portray the miraculous palace of Cupid or the vision of the great goddess Isis rising from the sea. Even where the

[1] The story gives a picture of a very cruel and hideous life. But the general atmosphere is so fantastic and unreal, that the picture thrills without revolting the reader.

narrative does not require such flamboyance, the eccentricities of the style produce a mock-heroic effect as entertaining as it is grotesque. If in the *Golden Ass* rhetoric has run mad, there is yet some method in the madness. For Apuleius was capable of writing in a very different manner. If we turn to the defence of himself against the charge of magic in a speech which was, at any rate in substance, delivered in a provincial law-court, we are confronted with something much more ordinary.[1] Affectation and bombast there are in plenty, but they are kept under comparative control. Even in the selection from his discourses known as the *Florida*, where the rhetoric of display is given full rein, preciosity is never so sustained as in the *Golden Ass*, and there are passages in which Apuleius makes it abundantly clear that he could write with restraint and dignity.[2] The *Golden Ass* is, it may be, the work of Apuleius' early youth; it certainly strikes the reader as the work of a young man.[3] But even if the faults

[1] See the concluding portions of the *Apologia*, where he sets forth the true facts of the case.

[2] E.g. the description of the death of Philemon, *Flor.* 16.

[3] He represents himself in the last book as dedicated to a life of abstinence and chastity. This suggests that the work was written before his marriage to Pudentilla described in the *Apologia*, while the enthusiasm that colours all the last book points to its having been written while the emotional effect of his initiation was still strong upon him. He had by the time of the *Apologia* been initiated into many mysteries (see c. 55, *sacrorum pleraque initia in Graecia participavi*), of which the mysteries of Isis may well have formed one. Further, the work was probably written at Rome (cp. note on the *Murtian pyramids*, Bk. VI, ch. 8, and the *Tullianum*, Bk. IX, 10), and if the evidence of Bk. XI may

and exuberance of his language be in part due to immaturity, it would be a wanton insult to assume that the author did not deliberately suit his language to the peculiarities of the story he had set out to tell. We need only compare his version of the tale with the Greek version, known as *Lucius or the Ass*, which has come down to us among the works of Lucian, to realize what an immense difference the fantastic diction of Apuleius makes to the reader's enjoyment of the story. And yet the style of the author of *Lucius or the Ass*, whoever he may have been, is far from being bad, and has certainly fewer positive defects than the style of Apuleius.

Not only does the main theme of the *Golden Ass* appear in this Greek version which has just been mentioned, but we have evidence of the existence of a third version of the story, also in Greek and attributed to the authorship of a certain Lucius of Patras. It is worth while considering the relations existing between the three different versions.[1] The

be trusted he was still a young man at the time of his residence there. It would be unwise to lay too much stress on the apology for stylistic deficiencies in *Met.* I. 1, but it certainly harmonizes with the view that the *Met.* is an early work. For the contrary view, see Vallette, *L'Apologie d'Apulée* (Paris, 1908).

[1] For the relationship between the three different versions of the story cp. Goldbacher, *Zeitschr. für öster. Gymn.* 23 (1872), pp. 223, 403; Bürger, *de Lucio Patrensi*, Berlin, 1877; and Rothstein, *Quaestiones Lucianeae*, p. 129, Berlin, 1888. Cp. also Schwartz, *Fünf Vorträge über den griech. Roman*, Berlin, 1896, p. 136. For the view that Apuleius copies the Pseudo-Lucian rather than Lucius of Patras, see Rohde, *Klein. Schrift.* 2, p. 70.

story told in *Lucius or the Ass* is in all essentials the same as that of the *Golden Ass*. Apart from the style, the only important difference lies in the omission of the numerous irrelevant incidents which lend such a charm to the work of Apuleius, while the conclusion is entirely different. Apuleius in his last book gives us a wonderful autobiographical fragment. Lucius the Greek, the kinsman of the famous Plutarch, suddenly becomes Apuleius of Madaura, the devotee of Isis, who is initiated into the mysteries of Egypt in token of gratitude for his restoration to human shape! In *Lucius or the Ass* there is no intervention of Isis. The restoration is due to a lucky chance, and the hero returns home, tarrying only long enough for the enactment of one unhappy and unedifying love adventure. A more different conclusion it would be hard to imagine. *Lucius or the Ass* ends on a farcical note; it has never really risen to the heights of romance; and the same vein of restrained but not ineffective comedy is maintained throughout. Apuleius without neglecting the humour of the story has succeeded in lifting it above the region of farce. The exquisite myth of Cupid and Psyche and the almost solemn and poetical conclusion colour all the story with a strange light. Nay, at the end Apuleius makes even a half-suggestion that the tale may have an allegorical meaning. His sufferings in the shape of an ass are represented as the punishment for his very earthly and reprehensible passion for Fotis, and he is henceforth dedicated to a life of abstinence and chastity. It is unnecessary,

with some commentators, to seek for allegory throughout the novel, but of the effectiveness of this strange change of atmosphere there can be no doubt.

It is however practically certain that *Lucius or the Ass* was not the original from which Apuleius took his plot, and it may well be that the model which inspired him was far less subdued in tone and incident. Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople in the ninth century, records in his *Bibliotheca* that he has been reading a collection of stories of miraculous transformations, written by one Lucius of Patras.[1] The first two books of this collection give the impression, he says, that they are an almost literal transcript from the *Lucius or the Ass* of Lucian. But on the whole he is inclined to think that Lucian has copied Lucius and not Lucius Lucian. 'For Lucian seems to have cut down the

[1] It is very doubtful whether the name Lucius of Patras is the name of the author of the story. Photius may have found a collection of stories, written in the first person, in which this Lucius of Patras was always the hero. It is true that in *Lucius or the Ass* the hero is described as a writer of stories and as having a poet-brother named Gaius. This does not take us very far. *Prima facie*, it is not very probable that the author should pose as the hero of this incredible tale. On the other hand, it must be remembered that Apuleius does in Book XI identify himself with the hero of the novel even at the price of serious inconsistency. For our present purpose this point is not very important. It is sufficient to indicate the possibility that in this story of the ass-hero we may have a traditional theme retold from time to time by different authors, in which the name Lucius is a constant element. That Photius regarded Lucius as the real author there can be no doubt.

longer story of Lucius and removed all that was necessary for his own purpose, and then, keeping the original phrases and sentences, to have welded together what he had left into a consecutive story.' Further, the tone of the two stories is different. 'Whereas Lucius writes as one who believes in the possibility of such transformations, Lucian writes as one who derides the extravagances of superstition.' Now though, as a matter of fact, there are no especial indications of a sceptical spirit in *Lucius or the Ass*[1] apart from an avoidance of any reference to the supernatural beyond the actual transformation, there can be no doubt that the work attributed to Lucian does make the same impression that it made upon Photius, namely that it is an abridgement of a larger work; skilful, but lacking in originality. In spite of a certain sprightliness and elegance the story is somewhat jejune, while there are also distinct traces here and there of actual omissions and inconsistencies such as would naturally occur in an epitome.

There is evidence that Apuleius drew on the original 'Lucius of Patras' rather than on the epitome of the Pseudo-Lucian. Close as is the resemblance between certain passages in *Lucius or the Ass* and in the work

[1] The probability is that Photius, believing the story to be by Lucian, read into it elements of the true Lucianesque tone. I cannot agree with modern critics like Schwartz (op. cit.) who detect a satirical tendency in *Lucius or the Ass*. Irony and quiet humour abound, but that is all. That the work is not by Lucian is almost certain. Not only is the style different, but the Attic is less pure.

of Apuleius, there are occasional indications which if not conclusive, are at least strongly suggestive, that Apuleius had before his eyes the story of Lucius of Patras. For instance, where the ass strives to carry the captive damsel to a place of safety, both Apuleius and the Pseudo-Lucian record the fact that they came to a cross-roads. In the *Golden Ass* there ensues a struggle between the girl and the ass. The latter knows that if they take one road they will meet the robbers as they return with their booty, and struggles to take the path that will lead them to freedom. In *Lucius or the Ass* they merely chance to meet the robbers at a cross-roads. The inference is that Apuleius records the original incident and that the pointless reference to the cross-roads in *Lucius or the Ass* is due to carelessness on the part of the epitomizer. Again, the sweetness of style together with the love of portentous incidents, which Photius mentions among the distinguishing characteristics of the work of Lucius of Patras, are far more likely than the less imaginative work of the Pseudo-Lucian to have inspired Apuleius, the passionate seeker after strange tales of magic and the devotee of poetical colour.

There remains the *prima facie* possibility that Apuleius was the original author of the story and that both Greek versions are borrowed from him. The possibility of this hypothesis has been tacitly denied in the preceding pages and indeed hardly requires disproof. It needs no very searching examination to become convinced that the Greek owes nothing to Apuleius, while

Apuleius owes a great deal to the Greek. Verbal resemblances are frequent, but Apuleius is always the borrower, as is shown by the numerous alterations, which can only be accounted for by Apuleius' desire to lend colour and picturesqueness to the narrative. It is impossible to suppose that the Pseudo-Lucian had the *Golden Ass* before him when he wrote. No epitomizer of Apuleius could have omitted all the thrilling and romantic episodes of which his pages are full and which lend so much charm to the story. Who would forgo the wonderful stories of Socrates and the witches, of the noseless man, of the murdered wineskins, of the various *crimes passionnels* told with such masterly effect, and above all of the exquisite myth of Cupid and Psyche? On the contrary, there is definite evidence that Apuleius inserted his episodes, whether of his own invention or borrowed from some other source, into the story provided for him by Lucius of Patras. There are slight differences of plot which are very significant, inasmuch as they spring from the introduction of alien matter into the original story. For instance, in *Lucius or the Ass* (22) the ass accompanies the robbers on one of their expeditions, while in the *Golden Ass* (6. 25) he remains in the robbers' cave to be fetched thence to assist in the removal of the spoil. The alteration must proceed from Apuleius, otherwise it is motiveless. It was necessary for Apuleius, since he wished to enable the ass to hear the story of Cupid and Psyche told by the old woman who kept house for the robbers to the young girl whom they had made their captive. Such

a story could only be told in the absence of the robbers and had to be told in the hearing of the ass. For this purpose the ass was left at home. More significant is the wonderful conclusion to the *Golden Ass*, of which mention has already been made. It is clear that Apuleius has improved on his original. Not even the Pseudo-Lucian, with his aversion for the bizarre and the marvellous, would have entirely suppressed so remarkable a feature of the adventures of Lucius.

Of the sources from which the episodes are drawn there is nothing known. Some may have been the invention of Apuleius himself, or may even have occurred in the original story by Lucius of Patras. But for the most part it is probable that they were borrowed from other authors. Two points are worth noting in this connexion. There is greater resemblance between several of the episodes than we should expect to find in an original work. For instance, there is an undue sameness about the four stories of faithless wives and their lovers, all of which occur in the ninth book. In two cases the lover hoodwinks the husband, in two he is discovered. In the last two cases, it is true, the parallelism is intentional, but the first two are wholly unconnected with one another and the repetition of the same theme within so short a space suggests the work of a rather careless adapter or *remanieur* rather than an original creator. The same argument may be applied to the two murder stories in the tenth book. Secondly, we may note traces of careless copying in at least one instance. In the eighth book the ass tells how his

master the miller was murdered at the instigation of his faithless wife, and how the ghost of the murdered man appeared to his daughter and revealed his wife's guilt. Incidentally then we learn that the ghost-seer was not the daughter of the murderess, but the step-daughter. But the fact is mentioned in the most casual way (31, *novercae*), as though we were supposed to be aware of it already, while no mention is made of the arrest and punishment of the murderess. It is difficult to resist the inference that this fault of workmanship is due to hasty and careless appropriation. Of the most famous episode, that of Cupid and Psyche, it is hard to speak with any certainty. Three separate strains seem to have gone to make the story. Primarily it is an old popular tale or fairy story, the one fairy story in fact that has been bequeathed to us by the literature of Greece and Rome. This has been worked over in the style of the Milesian tales and the fairy story has taken on the strange garb of an erotic romance. Thirdly, the whole episode is vaguely, very vaguely, tinged with allegory.

The origin of the fairy tale seems to have been the story of a princess who marries a prince of exquisite beauty, who may only wear his true shape by night; during the day he is a monster in the form of a snake; a curse is on his bride if she seek to know his face. She is led by curiosity to transgress his commands and he departs from her in sorrow. After many adventures she succeeds in regaining him. Such stories are found in the folk-tales of almost all races. The beast-lover recurs

again and again, and is familiar to us in the story of *Beauty and the Beast*. Equally common is the story of the lost husband, the most pathetic of all fairy stories. In Cupid and Psyche, as in many other cases, these two forms of folk-tale are combined. The nearest parallel to the tale as told by Apuleius is found in the old Indian legend of Pururavas and Urvasi, or in the story, still current in India, of Tulisa the woodcutter's daughter.[1]

Whatever the ultimate source from which the story of Cupid and Psyche be derived, there can be little doubt that for Apuleius the immediate source was a 'Milesian' romance, which, if we may judge from the silence of earlier authors, was of comparatively late date. Fulgentius (*Myth.* 3. 6) mentions a certain Aristophontes of Athens as having told the same tale as Apuleius, but we are little wiser for his information, as Aristophontes is a mere name to us. Certain it is that after beginning with all the simplicity of a fairy tale, the story takes on another tone. It becomes a romance filled with erotic conceits, such as had their origin in the Alexandrian school of the third century B.C. and abound in all subsequent amatory literature. There is also to be noted a quaint vein of parody or burlesque,

[1] For the legend of Cupid and Psyche, see Andrew Lang's preface to the reprint of Adlington's translation, 1887; Macculloch, *The Childhood of Fiction*, London (Murray), 1905, chs. 9 and 12; Friedländer, *Sittengeschichte*, i, pp. 522–563; Roscher, *Myth. Lexik.* s.v. *Psyche*; Beck's *Fabula de Psyche et Cupidine*, pref., Groningen, 1902; Norden, *Amor und Psyche*, Teubner, 1903.

notably in the passages where the gods appear upon the scene or where Venus upbraids or complains of the conduct of her son. It is strongly reminiscent of the burlesque of Lucian in the Dialogues of the gods, though it must have found parallels in earlier literature, such for instance as the works of the Alexandrian Rhinthon. The birthplace of the story that Apuleius had before him was not improbably Miletus. It is at least noteworthy that the parents of Psyche consult the oracle of Apollo at Miletus and that Apollo answers in Latin, in order, as Apuleius whimsically says, not to embarrass the writer of this Milesian tale, i.e. himself.

There remains the allegorical element. Too much has been made of it. In spite of the fact that it is obviously impossible to trace any consistent allegory throughout the delicate fantasy of this charming story, many learned men have tormented themselves to give the whole tale an allegorical interpretation. But the probability is that the allegory hardly extends beyond the names of Cupid and Psyche. From the fourth century onwards Eros and Psyche, Love and the human Soul, begin to appear together in works of art. Their relations vary widely. Sometimes Love is the tormentor, sometimes the passionate lover or the bridegroom. It is the latter type of conception that concerns us here as having served to mould the tale as told by Apuleius. It is possible also that in the descent of Psyche to the underworld, and again in the adventure where she is bidden fetch a jar of water from a mysterious stream, we may have faint echoes of the Orphic myths of the

soul's descent underground, to 'turn the wheel of a thousand years', be purged of earthly dross, and drink of the water of life.[1] But in spite of these possibilities we shall not go far astray if we take the story merely at its face value, and refuse to regard it as being more than one of the most charming fairy stories that have ever been told.

The total impression made by the *Golden Ass* is astounding, when we consider how little the work contains that is really original. It would perhaps be unjust to call Apuleius a plagiarist. Few plagiarists have ever been endowed with such rare gifts of style and imagination, and, even in more distinguished epochs of literature, the Greeks and Romans never regarded quarrying in the works of one's predecessors as a discreditable occupation. In our own language we have an interesting parallel in the *Morte d'Arthur* of Sir Thomas Malory. Malory was not an original writer, but he produced one of the most deservedly popular of English prose works whether for charm of style or fascination of matter. Apuleius may have been a literary parasite and charlatan, but he possessed something near akin to genius, and his thefts may be forgiven him. Few who have read his novel have not fallen under the fascination of his style and been captivated by the strangeness of the tales he has to tell. He would not put himself to the trouble to invent a story of his own, but he atones for his indolence by the rich

[1] For the Orphic myths, see Miss Jane Harrison's Prolegomena to Greek religion.

imagination that he shows in the treatment of detail. His work has not been without its influence. Boccaccio and La Fontaine have both put him under contribution, and the story of Cupid and Psyche has been dear to modern art and literature. It has inspired painters such as Burne-Jones and poets such as Morris, and the translation enshrined by Pater in the pages of *Marius the Epicurean* is not among the least charms of that work.

It is almost impossible for a translation, which aims at anything like fidelity to the words of the original, to reproduce more than a very pale and inadequate reflection of the romantic charm that suffuses almost every page of the *Golden Ass*. Such exuberance and preciosity cannot be transferred wholesale to the English language without producing an unduly forced and outlandish effect. The ideal would be a free paraphrase. The old Elizabethan translation, quite apart from its own intrinsic merits, must remain the best representation of the novel of Apuleius, if only because it is free, old, and Elizabethan, and the smack of its language is at once strange and sweet. To produce a modern translation that should be really adequate would require a greater genius than that of Apuleius. There is no harder task than to take liberties with one's own language. Beautiful as is Pater's translation of the story of Cupid and Psyche, it may be doubted whether the English reader will not get a truer impression of the charm of the original by turning to the verse translation by Robert Bridges or to the *Earthly Paradise* of William Morris.

If the present translation serves as an assistance to some few readers of the original, and for those who have never read a line of Apuleius succeeds in reproducing something of the charm of the actual story, even though it may not hope to catch of the magic of the style, it will have served its purpose. Its excuse at any rate may be that there exists only one English translation of the *Golden Ass* that repays reading. That is the translation of Adlington, which, for all its beauty, is inaccurate and, what is more serious, exceedingly hard to procure.

BOOK I

READER, it is my purpose to put together for thy 1
delight diverse tales after the well-known Milesian manner and to beguile thine indulgent ear with the merry music of my words, if only thou wilt deign to cast thine eyes upon this Egyptian papyrus indited with the subtle point of a reed cut from the banks of Nile. Thou shalt marvel therein at the transmutation of men's forms and fortunes to alien shapes, and at their restoration one with the other to their former state. Now I begin my tale. 'Who is he that speaks thus?' asks some one. Learn in a few words. Attic Hymettus and Ephyrean Isthmus and Spartan Taenarus, fields of fair fame, whose memory is stored up for ever in writings fairer still, these were the homes of mine ancestors. There in my boyhood's first campaigns did I win for my possession the speech of Athens. Thereafter in the Latin city I came to studies that were strange to me, and with grievous toil and never a master to teach me set myself diligently to learn the native speech of the Quirites. Wherefore, look you, I crave pardon at the outset if I shall offend in aught by uncouth utterance of strange phrases and jargon of the marketplace. This change from the Greek to the Latin tongue has its counterpart in the tale I am about to tell. My skill is that of the acrobat who leaps from one horse to the other. For the story

that I am going to tell is borrowed from the Greek. Give ear, good reader, and thou shalt have cause for joy.

2 I was going to Thessaly,—for my mother's family is sprung from that country and I am proud to say can count among its members the famous Plutarch and later his nephew, the philosopher Sextus. Well then, I was going to Thessaly on business. I had passed and left behind me steep mountain passes and slippery valley paths, dewy greensward and rich loam of plough lands, and the Thessalian horse that carried me, a beast of spotless whiteness, was exceeding weary. I too was tired of long sitting in the saddle and longed to dispel my fatigue by a brisk walk. So I leapt to the ground, carefully wiped away the sweat from my horse's forehead, stroked his ears, loosened the reins, and gradually urged him to a gentle walk, until such time as nature should bring its wonted relief and remove the burden of his weariness. With head stooped to earth he broke his fast as he walked and with sidelong sweep of his mouth browsed on the fields through which he passed, while I rejoined my two comrades who had forged somewhat ahead of us.

As I listened to hear of what they might be talking, one of them laughed loud and said, 'Nay! spare us such monstrous and absurd fabrications!' I am always athirst for novelties, and when I heard this, I cried, 'Come now, you must admit me to your conversation. It is no mere curiosity that prompts me to make such a request, but the desire to make my knowledge com-

plete, or at any rate as complete as may be. Besides, the charm and wit of your stories will smoothe away the difficulties of this hill we're climbing.'

Then he who had first spoken said to the other, 3
'Call it a lie if you will, but in good truth it is no more a lie than it would be to say that magic chants have power to make rushing rivers flow backwards, to bind the sea in sluggish calm, put breath in lifeless bodies, stay the sun in his course, draw foam from the moon, tear the stars from their places, banish the day and hold fast the darkness of night.'

This encouraged me to press my suit, and I said to him, 'Please finish the story you had begun; do not grudge it me. There's no cause for reluctance.' Then turning to the other, 'As for you,' said I, 'you, with your dull ears and obstinate scepticism, are rejecting what may perhaps turn out to be true after all. Good heavens! you don't seem to realize that it's mere perversity makes men think that things must needs be false because they seem strange to the hearing or new to the eyes, or at any rate far removed beyond the range of imagination. If you will only look into them a little more carefully, it's likely enough that you will find them not only obvious to the understanding but even easy to perform. Take an example. One 4
evening in the attempt to keep pace with my companions at table I hurried a little too much. I attempted to gulp down a rather large mouthful of pearl-barley flavoured with cheese and came within a hair's-breadth of death; for the food, being soft and sticky, became

lodged in my throat and obstructed the channels of my breath. And yet, only the other day, at Athens in front of the Painted Porch with these two eyes of mine I saw a mountebank on horseback swallow a sharp sword point foremost, and again, for the offer of a few pence, thrust a hunting-spear, its death-dealing point downwards, right into his very vitals! And, look you, above the lance-head, where the shaft of the inverted lance rose from his open jaws toward his crown, there stood up a pretty girlish-looking boy who danced so nimbly with many a tortuous bending of his body that he seemed to have neither bone nor muscle. All we who stood by marvelled. You might have likened him to some splendid snake twining with slippery coils about the staff that the god of healing bears, all rough with knots where the twigs have been lopped away. But now come, I beg you, begin once more the story you had set forth to tell. If our friend here won't believe it, I will, and at the first inn we come to you shall lunch with me. That shall be your payment for the story. You have my word for it.'

5 To this he replied, 'Thank you for your promise. I take it very kindly and I will continue the tale I had begun. But first I will call the sun above us, the divine all-seeing sun, to witness that my story is accurate and true. And your doubts will be removed when you reach the nearest Thessalian town, for such facts are no secrets there, but a matter of common talk. But you would perhaps like to know whence I come. I am a citizen of Aegium. Hear also how I make my living. I go

to and fro through all Thessaly, Aetolia, and Boeotia, trading in honey, cheese, and such-like victualler's stores. Well then, I had heard that at Hypata, the finest city in all Thessaly, there was a stock of newly made cheese of exquisite flavour to be sold at a very reasonable price. So I hastened thither with all speed to buy the whole lot. But as usual I had started left foot foremost and was cheated of my hopes of profit. For one Lupus, a wholesale dealer, had bought it up the day before. So, weary with my ineffectual haste, I went to the baths just as the evening star was rising. And there, lo and behold! I saw my comrade, Socrates. He was 6 sitting on the ground half-clothed in a torn cloak and looking quite another being, for he was pale and hideous and miserably lean, like one of those outcasts of fortune that beg for alms at street corners. He was a kinsman and an intimate friend, but when I saw him in such a plight, I could not help feeling some doubts in my mind, so I approached him. "Hallo!" said I, "my dear Socrates, what has happened? What means this woeful plight? What outrage have we here? Why, you have been mourned for at home and bidden a last farewell as one dead. Guardians have been appointed for your children by order of the chief justice of the province, your wife has performed the last offices for you, is wasted by her long grief and mourning, has wept her eyes almost blind for you, and is now being compelled by her parents to gladden her desolate house with the festivities of a second marriage. But here I see you—to our abiding shame—looking like some horrible spectre."

"Aristomenes," he replied, "in truth you little know the slippery tricks, the unstable flood and changeful ebb, wherewith Fortune has mocked me." And with these words he hid his face, which for some time had been crimson with shame, in his patchwork cloak, leaving his body bare from the waist down. I could no longer endure such a sight of woe, but laid a hand upon him and strove to make him rise.

7 But he kept his face veiled and said, "Leave me, leave me! Let Fortune enjoy her triumph a while longer!" I forced him to follow me, took off one of my two cloaks and hastily clad him or, I should rather say, covered his nakedness. This done, I took him forthwith to the bath. With my own hands I served him with oil and towels, and laboriously scraped off the thick coating of filth that was upon him, and after caring for him thoroughly led him to an inn, though I was quite worn out by my exertions and could scarce support his weary body. I laid him on a couch to rest, plied him with food to his heart's content, mellowed him with wine and beguiled him with stories.

His conversation was becoming quite cheerful and free, he began to show a shrewd humour and to talk without any sign of fear, when suddenly he heaved an agonized sigh from the depths of his bosom, struck his brow wildly with his right hand and cried, "Woe is me! It was just as I was going to take my pleasure at a show of gladiators—and a very fine show it was!—that I fell into these misfortunes. Just think of it! As you know well, I had gone to Macedonia on

matters of business. I was returning after ten months' absence in that country, and returning a richer man, when shortly before reaching Larissa, where I intended to witness the show in passing, I was attacked by a brutal gang of robbers in a lonely, swampy valley and robbed of all that I possessed. At length I escaped their clutches and, reduced to the last extremity, put up at a tavern, kept by a certain Meroe, who, though past her prime, was still quite a pretty woman. To her I told all the tale of my long sojourn abroad, my troublous homecoming, and my hapless falling among thieves. She began to treat me with more than kindness and welcomed me first to a good supper free of charge and then to her embraces. And from that day when she took me to her arms I have endured a long and baleful bondage. I gave her even the clothes which the robbers in the kindness of their hearts had left me to cover my nakedness, I gave her also every penny of the slender earnings that I won by plying the trade of porter—for my strength had not yet left me—until the favours of my wife and the cruelty of Fortune reduced me to the state in which you saw me just now."

"By Pollux," said I, "you deserve the very worst 8
of fates—if indeed there is anything worse than what you have actually been suffering—for preferring your filthy pleasures with a skinny old harlot to your home and children." But at this he put his forefinger to his lip and seemed quite beside himself with terror. "Hush! hush!" he said, and then seeking words wherewith to safeguard himself, "Not a word," he

cried, "against that divine woman, lest the recklessness of your speech do you a hurt!"

"What is that you say?" said I. "What sort of a woman is this omnipotent queen of landladies?" "A witch," he replied, "with power divine. She can call down the sky, hang earth in heaven, freeze fountains, melt mountains, raise the spirits of the dead, send gods to hell, put out the stars, and give light to Tartarus itself!" "I beseech you," said I, "clear away your tragic curtain, roll up your drop-scene, and speak in ordinary language!"

"Would you like," he replied, "to hear one or two, nay, not one or two, but many of her achievements? For to make the natives of this place or even the Indians or the two tribes of Ethiopia or the very Antipodes themselves love her to distraction is but a trifle and the merest child's-play for her magic. Only listen to what she did in the presence of many
9 witnesses. With one word she turned a lover who had left her for another into a wild beaver. Now that animal, when he fears capture at the hands of his pursuers, bites off that part of him which they seek and so escapes. Her purpose was to inflict a like fate upon him as a punishment for his infidelity. She also turned a neighbouring innkeeper, whose competition damaged her trade, into a frog; and now the poor old fellow swims about in a vat of his own wine and, squatting deep in the lees, summons his former customers with hoarse importunate croak. She turned another—a lawyer—into a ram because he had spoken

against her, and now he pleads in the shape of a ram! She also doomed the wife of one of her lovers to perpetual pregnancy for having uttered some saucy taunt againt her; she sealed up her womb when she was big with child and retarded the birth: and according to universal report the poor wretch has looked for eight years as if she was going to be the mother of a young elephant.

After a succession of such doings, when many persons had suffered at her hands, great public indignation was aroused against her, and it was resolved that on the morrow she should be punished with all the rigour of the law and should be stoned to death. This sentence she brought to naught by the power of her incantations, and, as the famous Medea by obtaining from Creon the respite of one little day destroyed his whole house, his daughter, and the aged king himself in the flames of the bridal wreath, so she performed dark rites of cursing among the tombs over a magic trench —as she herself told me soon afterwards when she was in liquor—and kept every one shut fast within his own doors by the silent power of the nether gods, so that for two full days bars could not be burst, doors torn down, or walls broken through. At last, all with one accord and with exhortations to one another cried out, binding themselves with the most solemn oaths never to lay hands on her themselves and promising to bring rescue and assistance, if any man designed anything to the contrary against her. Thus propitiated she loosed all the citizens from their imprisonment. But as for

him who had summoned the assembly that judged her, she transported him at dead of night with his whole house, walls, floor, foundations and all, locked and barred as it was, to another town, a hundred miles away, situated on the top of a bare mountain and consequently ill-supplied with water. And since the site was so thickly crowded with the houses of the inhabitants as to leave no room for a newcomer, she dropped the house in front of the town gate and went upon her way."

11 "Your story is as harrowing, Socrates, as it is marvellous," said I. "In fact, you have caused me no small anxiety, not to say fear. You have done more than make me uneasy, you have thrown me into an agony of terror. For I am afraid the hag may, as before, have employed some familiar spirit to inform her of what we have been saying. So let us to bed, early as it is, and, when we have slept off our fatigue, let us be off in the dark before the dawn and put as great a distance as may be between ourselves and this place."

Such was my advice, but before I had made an end, friend Socrates, overcome by the day's fatigues and the unusual amount of wine that he had consumed, fell fast asleep and began to snore loudly. So, after shutting the door and pulling the bolts, I placed my truckle-bed across the hinges, pushed it well up against the door and laid me down to rest. At first fear kept me awake, but at last about the third watch I began to doze a little. I had just gone off to sleep when the doors were thrown open with a violence no housebreaker

could have equalled. The hinges were broken and torn from their sockets and the doors battered to the ground. My truckle-bed, which was very small and decayed and lacked one of its legs, was overturned by the violence of the onset. I myself rolled out and fell to the ground, where I was covered and shielded by the bed which had fallen upside down upon me.

I then found that sometimes one is affected in 12
precisely the opposite manner to that which the occasion demands. Such are the workings of nature! For as tears often flow for joy, so now in the extremity of my terror I was wholly unable to refrain from laughing at the thought that I, Aristomenes, was turned tortoise! While I lay grovelling on the filthy floor under the well-timed protection of the truckle-bed, I watched what might hap, and as I looked out of the corner of my eye I saw two elderly women enter the room. The one carried a bright lantern, the other a sponge and a naked sword. Thus armed they took their stand on either side of Socrates, who was fast asleep. The woman with the sword began, "This, sister Panthia, is my sweet Endymion, my Ganymede, who has made light of my love and, not content with slandering me, now seeks to fly from me, while I like a second Calypso, deserted by the wily Ulysses, must bewail my loneliness for ever." Then stretching out her hand she showed me to her friend Panthia. "And there," she said, "is his good friend and counsellor, Aristomenes, who proposed this decampment and now lies grovelling on the ground under his truckle-bed, a

hair's-breadth this side death. He is watching all we do and thinks to get off scot-free after insulting me. In the fullness of time I'll make him rue his late saucy talk and his present curiosity. Nay! I won't wait, I'll do it now, this very moment!"

13 When I heard this, my agony was such that I became bathed in a cold sweat and my very inwards shook with terror until even the truckle-bed was disturbed by my shaking and danced and quivered over my back. But the good Panthia interposed, "Nay, sister Meroe, let us first tear this fellow limb from limb, like Bacchanals." To this Meroe—for I perceived that her name was in very truth the name that Socrates had given her in his story—made answer. "Yes! The other shall live, that there may be some one to give this poor wretch his burial in a shallow grave!" Then pulling Socrates' head to one side she plunged the sword right up to the very hilt into the left side of his throat and caught all the blood that streamed from it in a small bladder, which she applied to the wound so that not a drop could be seen anywhere. I saw this with my own eyes! Then, as I suppose, that she might omit none of the rites proper to the slaying of her victim, our excellent Meroe plunged her hand through the wound into his very vitals, and after feeling about dragged out my poor comrade's heart. He meanwhile—for his gullet had been severed by the violence of the blow—kept uttering a cry or rather a shriek that gurgled indistinctly through the wound as he gasped out his life's breath. Panthia then blocked

the wound, where it gaped widest, with the sponge, saying, "Have a care, sponge, thou child of the sea, that thou cross no running water." With these words they left him and forthwith pulled away the truckle-bed and deluged me with filth.

They had scarcely passed beyond the threshold, 14
when the doors rose from the ground and resumed their former position without a trace of injury. The hinges sank back in their sockets, the bars shot back into the doorposts, the bolts sprang back to their places in the crossbars. And there I lay just as I was, grovelling on the ground, faint, naked, shivering, covered with filth, half-dead. Nay, I seemed to be my own survivor, a kind of posthumous self, while in any case I was a safe candidate for the gallows. "What will become of me," said I, "when they find him in the morning with his throat cut? If I tell the truth, it will not seem even plausible. It will be retorted, 'A sturdy fellow like yourself should have been a match for a woman, or at least, if you felt resistance to be impossible, you might have called for help. A man's throat is cut before your eyes and you say not a word! How was it you escaped those same murderous hands? How was it that their brutal cruelty spared you, in spite of the fact that you had witnessed and might denounce their crime? Since you escaped death *then*, return to its clutches and die *now*.'"

Again and again I revolved these thoughts in my mind, and meanwhile night was wearing toward day. I thought it best therefore to make a stealthy escape

before dawn and to take the road, though my feet faltered with terror. So I picked up my pack, inserted the key and attempted to turn the lock. But that trusty, faithful door, which had unbarred itself of its own accord during the night, only opened with the utmost reluctance after a long struggle and after frequent insertions of the key, which was its own sure enough.
15 This done, I cried, "Hallo! you there, where are you? open the inn door. I must be off before dawn." The porter was lying on the ground behind the door and was even now half-asleep. "What!" said he, "Are you starting on your journey while it is still night? Don't you know that the roads are infested with robbers? you may perhaps have some crime on your conscience and long for death; but I'm not such a pumpkin-headed idiot as to sacrifice my life for you." "It's nearly dawn," I replied. "Besides, what can robbers take from a traveller so hopelessly poor as I am? You fool, don't you know that not even ten athletes can strip a naked man?" In answer to this he turned wearily on to his other side and said, "How do I know that you are not seeking safety in flight after cutting the throat of that fellow-traveller of yours with whom you turned in last night?"

I remember that at that moment earth seemed to gape for me and I caught a glimpse of the very depths of hell with Cerberus in the abyss waiting to devour me. I also called to mind that our excellent Meroe had not spared my life out of pity, but had merely gratified her
16 spite by keeping me for the gallows. So I returned to

my chamber and considered what might be the best method of committing suicide. But as the only deadly weapon vouchsafed to me by Fortune was my wretched truckle-bed, I addressed it thus: "O sweet bed, joy of my heart, that hast endured such woes with me, that hast witnessed and beheld the deeds of this night, sole testimony that I may call to prove mine innocence if I am brought to trial, now, even now provide me with a weapon that shall win me safety, for I would hasten on my journey to the dead." With the words I hurriedly untied the rope that was wound this way and that across its framework, cast one end of the cord over a small beam that projected on one side of the room beneath the window, and when I had made it fast, knotted the other end into a noose. I then climbed on to the bed as an eminence whence I might launch myself to destruction, and put the noose about my neck. But as with one foot I thrust away the support on which I rested, in order that when my weight came upon the cord it might be drawn tight about my gullet and choke the passage of my breath, the rope, which was old and exceedingly rotten, broke beneath my weight and I fell from on high on to Socrates who lay near me. I collapsed upon him and rolled with him to the ground. At this very moment, lo and behold! the porter burst 17
into the room crying loudly, "Where have you gone, you who were in such an unreasonable hurry to be off at midnight and are now snoring in your bedclothes?"

At this Socrates, wakened either by our overthrow or by the porter's untimely clamour, I know not which,

rose, before I had time to find my feet. "Truly, it's not without good cause that the whole tribe of innkeepers are detested by their guests. For this wretch, whose curiosity has led him to break in upon us in this unseasonable way—I suppose he wanted to steal something!—has made such a frightful noise that he has roused me from a deep sleep, for all my weariness."

I disentangled myself with joyful alacrity, quite overcome by my unexpected happiness. "There," I cried, "most faithful of porters, look, there is my comrade and very dear friend, whom you accused me of having murdered. You drunken sot, you have been making a night of it!" And with the words I embraced Socrates and kissed him. He asked me what all this meant. I invented some absurd jest on the spur of the moment and put off his question to some other occasion when we could talk the matter over. I then seized him by the hand and said, "Let us be off and take advantage of the early hour for a pleasant journey." So saying I took up my pack and after paying the innkeeper the price of our night's lodging we went upon our way.

18 We had gone some little distance and by now the sun was risen and flooding everything with his light. I looked curiously at my comrade's throat just where I had seen the sword thrust in and said to myself, "You must be mad, Aristomenes. You've been drowning your cares in the winecup and had a nightmare. Here is Socrates untouched, scatheless, in perfect health. Where is the wound, where is the sponge, where the

scar that should be so fresh and so deep?" Then turning to him I said, "It's not without reason that good doctors tell us that men who are swollen with food and wine are visited by frightful nightmares. Why, last night was a night of horror for me. Just because I had exceeded a little in my cups, I witnessed the most awful and appalling visions; indeed, even now I feel as if I were besprinkled and defiled with human gore!"

At this he smiled and said, "As to that, you're quite mistaken! But as a matter of fact I too had a dream in which I thought my throat was cut. For I felt a sharp pain at my throat and thought my very heart was being torn from me, and even now my breath comes faint, my knees tremble, my feet stumble, and I want some food to restore my strength." "Well," said I, "here's your breakfast all ready for you", and with the words I took my wallet from my shoulders and hastily giving him some bread and cheese said, "Let us sit down under the plane-tree over there."

We did so. I took some food from the wallet for 19
myself and watched him eating greedily. I noticed that he was becoming thinner and thinner, that his face had turned yellow as boxwood, and that his strength was failing. Indeed, such a deathly change of colour had come upon him, that the thought of those Furies I had witnessed during the night was recalled to my mind and filled me with such terror that the very first morsel of bread that I took, small though it was, stuck in the middle of my throat and refused either to come up or go down. My fear was yet further increased by

the number of travellers whom we now began to meet. For if one of us were found dead, who would think the other guiltless? In the meantime Socrates, satisfied by the inroads he had made on the food, began to feel intolerably thirsty; for he had greedily devoured the greater portion of a most excellent cheese and there was a stream not far off from the roots of the plane-tree where we lay. It was smooth as any marsh pool and went loitering down with gentle current, while its brightness might have vied with silver or glass. "See," said I, "go and quench your thirst in the milky waters of that stream." He rose, and waiting till he found a level spot along the margin's edge, kneeled down and stooped to the water in his eager desire for a draught. But scarcely had he touched the topmost surface of the water with the very tip of his lips, when a wound gaped wide and deep in his throat and the sponge suddenly rolled out followed only by a very slight effusion of blood. The lifeless body was on the point of falling into the water, when I caught hold of one of its feet and dragged it with difficulty to the top of the bank. There I bewailed my poor comrade as long as time permitted, and then laid him in a sandy grave hard by the river, there to rest to all eternity. Trembling and in extreme terror for myself I fled through lonely solitudes far from the paths of men, and as though I had the guilt of murder on my soul, abandoned my country and my home. And now I have taken to myself another wife and dwell in self-chosen exile in Aetolia.'

Such was Aristomenes' story. His companion, who

at the very outset had rejected his words with obstinate incredulity, said, 'Of all incredible stories that is the most incredible, and of all lies yours is the most absurd.' Then turning to me, he said, 'Your dress and bearing show you to be a man of culture. Do you believe this romance?' 'I think nothing impossible,' I replied; 'I believe that everything befalls mankind just as the Fates decree. For I am sure that you and I and everybody meet with many wonderful and almost unprecedented experiences, which would certainly not be believed if told to any one who had no personal knowledge of the occurrences; and by Hercules, I believe our friend here, and am most grateful to him for having diverted us by such an entertaining and delightful story. Thanks to him I have reached the end of a long and toilsome journey without the least weariness or fatigue, and I think my horse too will be glad of the benefit conferred on us, inasmuch as I have been carried to the very gate of the city there, not by his back but by my own ears.'

This was the end of our conversation and of our 21
companionship. For my comrades turned to the left and entered a small house hard by. I approached the first inn that I saw, and finding a very ancient landlady, asked her forthwith whether this was the town of Hypata. She replied that it was. 'Do you know Milo, one of the first citizens of the place?' I asked. She smiled and replied, 'You are quite right in calling him the first man in the place, for he lives right outside the walls of the town.' 'Jesting apart,' said I, 'tell me good mother, what sort of a man is he, and where is his

house?' She replied, 'Do you see those windows at the end there, looking out upon the city, and the doors on the other side with a back view of that alley close by? That's where Milo lives. He has plenty of cash and is exceedingly rich; but he has a bad name for his outrageous avarice and disgusting meanness. He makes a large income by lending money, for which he demands security in gold or silver; but he keeps himself shut up in a tiny house and broods eternally over his pelf, though he has got a wife to share his misery. He has only got one servant, a young girl, and he goes about in clothes that make him look like a beggar.'

On hearing this I laughed and said, 'In truth, my friend Demeas showed remarkable kindness and forethought on my behalf in launching me on my travels with a letter of introduction to such a man as this. For clearly I need not be afraid of the least wisp of
22 smoke or kitchen-reek in Milo's house.' So saying, I advanced a little farther and reached the door. I found it firmly bolted. So I began to beat it and to call loudly on those within. At length a young woman came out. 'Hallo!' said she, 'you've been beating our door very hard. Do you want to borrow money? If so, what security are you prepared to give? We only take gold and silver. Or are you the only creature in the world who doesn't know that?' 'Hush!' said I, 'don't talk of such unpleasant things, but tell me whether I shall find your master at home.' 'Certainly,' she replied, 'but what do you want?' 'I have letters of introduction to him from

Demeas of Corinth.' 'Wait here,' said she, 'while I announce your arrival.' So saying she went in and bolted the door again. After a little she came back and opened it, saying, 'He begs you to enter.'

I went in and found him lying on a very meagre truckle-bed, just about to have his dinner. His wife sat at his feet and there was an empty table in front of them, at which he pointed, saying, 'You are welcome.' 'Thank you,' said I, and gave him Demeas's letter. He read it hurriedly and said, 'It is very good of Demeas to introduce so distinguished a guest.' So saying he 23
bade his wife remove herself from the bed and invited me to take her place. I still hesitated out of sheer modesty, but he caught me by the cloak and said, 'Sit down there. We can't get any chairs for fear of robbers, and our furniture is very inadequate.' I sat down. He continued, 'Your good looks and your modesty, which is really quite maidenly, would have led me to suppose, and rightly too, that you came of a distinguished family. And Demeas confirms my conjectures by what he says in his letter. So I hope you won't despise the smallness of our hovel. You shall have the next room to this and you will find it comfortable quarters. Make yourself at home. For you will increase the dignity of our house by your condescension and bring great credit on yourself as well, if you will put up with such humble accommodation, like the famous Theseus, your father's namesake, who was not above accepting the hospitality of the old woman Hecale.' Then calling the maid, 'Fotis,' said he, 'take our

guest's baggage and put it in the bedroom there just as you find it. And be quick and get some oil from the cupboard that he may anoint himself, and towels to dry him and anything else that is necessary, and then take him to the nearest baths. He has had a long and toilsome journey and must be tired.'

24 These words gave me some notion of Milo's parsimonious nature. Wishing therefore to make myself agreeable to him, I said, 'I really don't need any of these things: I always carry them with me when I travel. And I can easily inquire for the baths. But take these coins, Fotis, and buy some hay and barley for my horse which has carried me most bravely. That is what I want most.' When this had been done and my baggage had been taken to the bedroom, I set forth to go to the baths. First, however, I went to the provision-market to provide something for us to eat. There I saw a magnificent lot of fish for sale. I inquired their price, but finding that the fishmonger asked a hundred sesterces for them, I treated him with contempt and secured them for twenty denarii. I was just leaving the market when I met Pythias, who had been a fellow-student of mine at Attic Athens. He hailed me affectionately, for it was long since we had met. He then rushed at me and, after embracing me and kissing me with much warmth, said, 'My dear Lucius, it's a long time, by Pollux it is, since I have had a sight of you. By Hercules, we haven't met since the day we left the school of our professor, Clytius. But what brings you so far abroad?' 'You

shall know to-morrow,' I replied. 'But what is this? I see my prayers have been answered, and right glad I am. For I see you have got lictors and rods and a magistrate's dress.' 'I am in charge of the market,' he said; 'I hold the post of aedile, and if you wish to buy anything I will do anything I can to help you.' I declined his good offices on the ground that I had already procured more than enough fish for supper. But Pythias seeing the basket shook the fish up into clearer view, and asked, 'How much did you pay for this trash?' I replied that with the utmost difficulty I had beaten the fisherman down to twenty denarii.

When he heard that, he seized my right hand and 25
dragged me back to the provision market. 'And who was it,' he asked, 'that sold you this rubbish?' I pointed out a little old man who sat in a corner. Pythias forthwith put on his harshest voice as best suiting the dignity of his office, and rebuked him. 'So then,' he said, 'you have no consideration for my friends, or indeed for any visitors to this place. You ask huge prices for your worthless fish and reduce the flower of all Thessaly to the likeness of a stony desert by the dearness of your wares! But you shall suffer for it. I'll soon show you how evildoers are going to be punished under my jurisdiction!' So saying, he spilt the contents of the basket into the middle of the street and told his attendant to walk upon the fish and trample them all under foot. Pythias was hugely delighted by this proof which he had given of his austerity and bade me go home, saying, 'My

dear Lucius, I have punished the old rogue pretty severely and am content.'

This performance threw me into a state of consternation, and I went off to the baths feeling absolutely stupefied. For, as the result of my sage fellow-student's policy of 'thorough', I had lost both my money and my supper.

After bathing I returned to Milo's hospitable abode
26 and withdrew into my chamber. Suddenly Fotis the maid appeared and told me that my host was asking for me. Knowing Milo's frugality, I begged politely to be excused, saying that I thought I required sleep rather than food to dispel the fatigues of my journey. When Milo received my message, he came himself and seizing me with his right hand, gently attempted to draw me towards him. I hung back and offered a polite resistance, but he said, 'I will not go until you consent to follow me.' He backed this assertion with an oath, so I yielded a reluctant obedience to his insistence, followed him to his truckle-bed, and sat down. Then said he, 'How is our dear Demeas? How is his wife? How are his children? How are his slaves?' I answered each of his questions. Then he began to inquire more closely into the reasons for my journey. When I had told him all, he proceeded to ask me with the greatest detail about my native town, its chief citizens, and finally even about the governor of the province. At last, however, he became aware of my condition. For this interminable chatter coming as it did on the top of the fatigues of a most exacting journey

quite exhausted me, and I was getting so drowsy that I kept breaking off in the middle of my words. Indeed, I was so done up that I could only stammer out sentences as meaningless as they were jerky and disconnected. So he graciously permitted me to go to bed. At last, at last, I was free from the garrulous but famishing entertainment provided by this noisome old fool and retired to my bedroom heavy with sleep, but not, alas! with food. For all that I had had for supper was chatter, chatter. Once in bed, I gave myself up to the slumber I had so long desired.

BOOK II

1 As soon as the sun new-risen had banished night and restored the day, I woke from slumber and at once left my bed, for I was most anxious to make myself acquainted with the rarities and wonders of the place. I reflected that I was now in the heart of Thessaly, the native land of magical incantations, and celebrated as such by common consent through all the world. I thought also of the story told by my good comrade, Aristomenes, the scene of which was laid in this place; my hopes and my scientific interests alike combined to put me in a state of great excitement and I observed everything that I saw with curious eyes. Nothing met my gaze in that town which I believed to be what it really was. I thought that everything had been transformed by wizard murmurs to a shape other than its own, that the stones on which I stumbled were petrified men, that the birds which I heard were men encased in feathers, that the trees surrounding the walls were men who had sprouted into leaf, and that the waters of the fountains had once worn the semblance of men. I expected every minute to see statues and pictures walk, to hear walls talk, oxen and cattle prophesy, and sudden oracles to fall from heaven itself and from the orb of day.

2 In this state of excitement, in fact quite overwhelmed

by the desire that tormented me, although I found not a trace or single vestige of what I longed to see, I still went the round of all the town and I strolled from door to door like some rich and leisured lounger staring at everything I saw. Suddenly unawares I found myself in the provision market, and there I came upon a woman closely attended by a number of slaves. She was walking briskly; the gold in which her jewels were set and with which her garments were embroidered proclaimed her to be a married woman of good birth. Close to her side walked an old man bowed down with years, who had no sooner set eyes upon me than he cried, 'By Hercules, it's Lucius.' He saluted me with a kiss and murmured something in the woman's ear that I could not catch. Then 'Why', said he, 'don't you come and salute your kinswoman?' 'I hardly like to,' I replied, 'since I do not know the lady.' A sudden blush suffused my cheeks and I stood where I was with head bowed. She turned to look at me and said, 'See, he has all the noble modesty of that best of women, his mother Salvia; and in person too he's her very image; tall but nicely proportioned, slender without being thin, complexion rosy but not too red, yellow hair simply arranged, tawny eyes but watchful and with flashing glance just like an eagle's, face handsome in all its features, and a graceful and unaffected gait.' She added, 'Lucius, I brought you up with my own 3
hands. For your mother and I are united by more than mere ties of blood; we were brought up under the same roof. Both of us spring from the family of Plutarch,

the same nurse suckled us; and we grew up together like sisters. The only thing that separates us is rank, for while she made a most distinguished marriage, I married a private citizen. I am Byrrena, whose name, I dare say, you have heard pretty often as one of those who brought you up. Come then, don't be shy, but accept the hospitality of my house, or rather regard it as if it were your own.'

Her words had given time for my blushes to disperse, and I answered, 'Kinswoman, I cannot think of leaving my host Milo, against whom I have no ground of complaint; but I will promise you this, as I may without incivility. As often as I have to travel this way again, I will never miss an opportunity of staying with you.'

In the course of this conversation and similar words that followed, we arrived at Byrrena's house, which was only a few steps off. The hall was marvellously
4 beautiful. At each of its four corners stood a pillar bearing an image of the goddess of victory, with wings spread wide and dewy feet that held motionless the rolling sphere on whose unstable summit they rested. So lightly trod they thereon that it seemed they could not stand still; nay, thou hadst even thought they flew. And, lo! a block of Parian marble wrought into the likeness of Diana occupied the midst of the hall and lent balance and symmetry to the whole; a statue of perfect beauty, with raiment blown in the wind and feet that pressed nimbly forward, it fronted all who entered and the majesty of the deity made it worshipful. Dogs guarded the goddess on either side, and the dogs also

were wrought in stone. Their eyes glared threats, their ears were pricked, their nostrils parted, their mouths grinned fiercely; and if ever some dog began to bark hard by, thou hadst thought the sound came from the throats of stone. But that excellent sculptor had shown the greatest proof of his craftsmanship by making the dogs rear up with breasts raised high in air, so that their forefeet seemed to run, while their hinder feet stood still. Behind the goddess rose a rock shaped like a cave, adorned with moss and grass and twigs and foliage, with shrubs there and vine-leaves here, all blossoming in stone. Within, the reflection of the goddess shone on the polished marble. From the outer edges of this rock there hung exquisitely sculptured apples and grapes, perfect copies displayed by art in rivalry with nature. Nay, some there were thou mightest have thought to pluck and eat, when autumn full of new wine should have breathed the hue of ripeness on them; and didst thou stoop and gaze on the stream that flowed from beneath the goddess's feet with gently rippling waters, thou wouldst deem those clusters were true clusters swinging in air, among all their attributes of truth lacking not that of motion. In the midst of the marble[1] foliage Actaeon craned forward, his curious gaze fixed on the goddess; the shining marble and the stream alike reflected his image, as already half-transformed to the semblance of a stag he waited for Diana to bathe.

Again and again my eyes explored each detail with exquisite delight, till Byrrena said, 'All that you see

[1] *lapidis* (MSS.).

is yours.' Then she bade every one leave us, as she would talk with me alone. When they were all gone, she said, 'Dearest Lucius, I fear for you most anxiously, and would forewarn you while the peril yet is far from you, for I love you as my own son. By this goddess, I beseech you, be on your guard; I adjure you, be upon your guard with all your might against the evil arts and wicked spells of Pamphila, the wife of that Milo with whom you tell me you are lodging. She is believed to be a witch of the first order and to know all manner of incantations such as are sung over the tombs of the dead. By breathing on twigs and stones and trifling objects of that nature she can drown the light of the starry firmament in the depths of hell and plunge it in ancient chaos. As soon as she sets eyes on any handsome youth, she is taken with his charms and forthwith fixes her eyes and her whole soul upon him. She lays wait for him with her allurements, invades his soul and binds him with eternal fetters of passionate love. Those who do not fall in with her desires, but render themselves vile in her eyes by the rejection of her love, she transforms in the twinkling of an eye into stones and cattle and all manner of beasts, or in some cases makes them as though they had never been. It is this I fear for you, it is of this I bid you beware. For her passion burns continually, and your youth and beauty are such as might well excite it.' Such were the words Byrrena uttered, showing herself not a little anxious for my sake.

6 Nevertheless, as soon as I heard mention of the

name of magic, the name I had ever so longed to hear, I became all on fire with curiosity and was so far from being on my guard against Pamphila that I was even desirous of submitting myself to her instruction, whatever the cost, and would verily have hurled myself into the abyss with desperate leap. I freed myself from Byrrena's grasp as though it had been a chain that bound me, bade her a hurried farewell, and flew with all speed to Milo's house, my mind full of the wildest expectation. And while I walked with hurried steps like any madman, I said to myself, 'Come, Lucius, keep your eyes open and sharpen your wits. The chance you desired is come. You may now fill yourself with tales of wonder to your heart's content, as you have long prayed to do. Away with childish fears, up and grapple with your fortune face to face. Avoid the embraces of your hostess, see that you do no wrong to the good Milo, but do all you can to win Fotis the maidservant. For she is quite pretty, has a sportive disposition and a charming wit. And when you were retiring to sleep last night, with what kindly courtesy she led you to your room! How nicely she put you to bed and how affectionately she tucked you up! How she kissed your face! and what reluctance to leave you was written on her countenance! And when she went, remember how she kept stopping and looking back at you. May the omen prove fair and fortunate; urge your suit with Fotis, perilous though it be!'

As I thus reasoned with myself I reached Milo's 7

door and wasting no words, like the senators who vote without speaking, plied my feet to give effect to my resolution. I found neither Milo nor his wife at home, but only my sweet Fotis. She was cutting up some pigs' inwards to make stuffing and preparing a hash[1] together with some gravy, which, as my nose told me from a distance, was exceedingly savoury. She was clad in a neat linen tunic, her skirts girt rather high with a bright pink ribbon fastened prettily beneath her breast. She was spinning the basin of food round and round in her rosy hands, and as she shook it again and again with circular motion, she swayed her limbs gently to and fro, and her supple back quivered softly and bent with comely undulation. I was struck dumb with admiration at the sight and stood marvelling. At length I addressed her. 'How charmingly, how merrily you twirl that basin, my pretty Fotis. What delicious dainties you're making. Happy, nay, blest, if truth be true, is he who has your leave to dip his finger in them.'

To this the saucy wench replied, for she had a very pretty wit. 'My poor boy, get away from my fire, as far as you can. Quick! If the least spark of mine touch you, you'll be all on fire within and I shall be the only person who can put out the conflagration.'

8 As she spoke she looked at me and laughed. I did not leave her till I had carefully surveyed all her

[1] The MSS. add the words *ambacu pascuae iurulenta*. The words have no meaning, and no plausible emendation has been proposed.

beauties. But why do I speak of other beauties, when my sole thought has ever been first to look at the head and hair with eager staring gaze and to delight myself with dreaming of it when I am alone? I have a firm and settled conviction that I am right in my views on this point, since the hair is the fairest part of all the body, is placed in an open and conspicuous position and is the first thing to meet our eyes, while its natural sheen does for the head what the cheerful colours of bright raiment do for the other limbs. But—though it is a sin to speak of it, and I pray that so frightful a sight is nowhere to be seen—if you should despoil the head of an exquisitely beautiful woman of its hair and deprive her face of its natural adornment, though she had descended from heaven, or sprung from the sea and had the waves for nurses, nay, though she were Venus herself, attended by all the choir of graces and escorted by the whole tribe of Cupids and girt with her cestus, sweet as cinnamon and distilling balsam, and yet were bald, she would give no pleasure even to Vulcan, her amorous spouse. What shall one say, 9
when the hair glistens with ravishing hues and resplendent sheen, flashes swift lightnings against the sunlight, or shines with calmer glow, or changes its hue from beauty to beauty, and now from glistening gold sinks to soft honey-coloured shade, now with its raven blackness rivals the dark purple shimmer on the necks of doves, or when, smeared with Arabian unguents, parted with the fine teeth of a sharp comb and gathered behind in a knot, it greets the lover's eyes and mirror-like sends

back a reflection fairer than the truth? What shall one say when it is heaped thick in many a tress upon the crown or streams down the back with long far-floating locks? Such is the glory of the hair, that though a woman go forth in raiment adorned with gold and gems and all manner of ornament, yet, if she tire not her hair, she cannot be said to be adorned.

But it was no laboured ornament, but artless grace that lent an added charm to my sweet Fotis. Her locks streamed gently down in their profusion, and hung about her neck and were massed about her nape and sank softly down in intricate tresses, till at last they were gradually gathered to a coil and bound in a knot upon the crown of her head.

10 I could no longer endure the torment of such fierce delight, but bending over her I implanted the sweetest of all kisses just where the hair climbs to the summit of the head. She bent her neck back and looking at me out of the corners of her twinkling eyes, 'Hallo! master student,' said she, 'you are getting a taste of the fruit that is bitter sweet. Have a care lest the honey be so sweet that it will sour your bile for many a long day.'

'What matters that, my heart's joy?' I replied; 'I am ready for the smart; if only I may refresh myself now and again with one little kiss, love may put me on his gridiron and roast me.' With the words I caught her in a closer embrace and began to kiss her. Then, as she warmed to passion like to mine, I cried, 'I shall perish, nay, my fate is long since sealed, if thou console

me not.' At this she kissed me again, and said, 'Be of good cheer! my heart is thine! Wait till dinner is over and I will come to thee.'

After murmuring these words and their like to one 11
another we parted. It was just noon and Byrrena sent me as tokens of her affection a fat pig, five young chickens, and a jar of rare old wine. The rest of the day was given up first to bathing and finally to dinner. For at the excellent Milo's invitation I sat down to dinner with him at his exquisite little table! Remembering Byrrena's warning I screened myself as far as possible from the sight of his wife. When I cast my eyes upon her face it was with a shudder as though I were looking on Avernus' lake. Instead, I cheered my soul by many a glance at Fotis, who was waiting upon us. Suddenly Pamphila, looking at the lamp—for it was now evening—said, 'What heavy rain we shall have to-morrow.' When her husband asked her how she had discovered that, she replied that the lamp had foretold it to her. At this remark Milo laughed and said, 'We keep a fine Sibyl in the house in the person of that lamp, which from the observatory of its chandelier espies all the business of the skies and the sun itself.'

At this I struck in, 'This is my first experience of 12
this kind of divination. But it is not to be wondered at if that tiny flame, small though it be and the work of men's hands, remembers none the less that greater flame that burns in heaven as being its parent, and is therefore divinely gifted to know and proclaim to us

what he purposes to bring about in the far heights of air. Even at Corinth in my own country there is a certain Chaldean stranger whose marvellous responses have set all the world agog. For a fee he reveals the secrets of the fates to the people, telling them which days are propitious for a happy marriage, which for laying the foundations of walls that shall stand for ever, which shall bring profit to the merchant, success to the traveller, or fair voyage to ships. In fact, when I asked him what would be the outcome of this my journeying abroad, in reply he prophesied many most marvellous things of very varied import. Now he said that I should become a name of high renown, now that I should be the hero of a remarkable tale, an incredible romance, and that books should be written concerning me.'

13 At this Milo smiled and said, 'What is this Chaldean like to look upon and what is his name?' 'He is tall, and rather dark,' I replied, 'and calls himself Diophanes.' 'That's the very man,' said he. 'He was here among us and uttered many similar prophecies to many persons. He pocketed very considerable fees, nay, I may say that he made a magnificent harvest. But, poor wretch, he met with a most unhappy mischance, I might even call it cruel disaster. One day when he was surrounded by a great throng of people and was foretelling the destinies to a ring of bystanders, a man of business called Cerdo approached him and asked him to name a lucky day on which he might start to travel abroad. He selected a day and told it

him. Cerdo produced his purse, poured out the money and counted out a hundred denarii as a reward for his divination, when, lo and behold! a young man of good birth crept up behind the seer, plucked him by the cloak, and when he turned round embraced him and kissed him most affectionately. He returned his kiss and forthwith made him sit down beside him. So overcome was he with amazement at this sudden apparition that he forgot the business on which he was at the moment engaged and began to speak with him. "I am indeed delighted to see you," he said; "when did you arrive?" "Only last evening," replied the other; "but do you in turn tell me, dear comrade, what sort of journey did you have both by sea and land after you took ship so suddenly from the island of Euboea?" To this Diophanes the admirable Chaldean 14
replied—for he had not yet recovered himself and his wits had deserted him—"I can only wish my enemies and all those that hate me so horrible a journey. It was worthy of Ulysses. For the ship in which I sailed was tossed this way and that by tempestuous whirlwinds, lost both its steering-oars and was with great difficulty run aground on the farther shore. There she sank at once and we had much ado to swim ashore with the loss of all our possessions. And then all we managed to scrape together by the charity of strangers or the kindness of friends was seized by robbers, and poor Arignotus my only brother had his throat cut before my eyes while he was attempting to resist their audacious onslaught." As he told his

melancholy story, Cerdo, the man of business of whom I spoke, snatched up the money that he had intended as a reward for his divination and decamped forthwith. Then at last Diophanes woke to the situation and, seeing all of us who stood round dissolved in loud laughter, perceived what a fool he had made of himself. But, Master Lucius, I hope that the Chaldean has told you the truth, though he has told it no one else. Good luck to you, and may you have a prosperous journey!'

15 While Milo discoursed thus tediously, I groaned inwardly and was furious with myself for having started him on these interminable stories at such an unsuitable moment. For they were robbing me of the best part of the evening and the delights which it had in store. At last, throwing shame to the winds, I said to him, 'As far as I am concerned your friend Diophanes may just endure his evil fortune, and earth and sea are welcome yet a second time to swallow up the booty he wins from all the world. But I am still crippled by the fatigues of yesterday. So forgive me if I retire rather early.' I suited the deed to the word and went to my room, where I found a most elegant repast had been prepared. My servants' beds had been laid on the ground outside my room and as far as possible from it, that we might have privacy for our conversation. Beside my bed was placed a small table on which was spread no mean display of viands, the remains of the various courses of our dinner, together with cups of ample size. These had already been half-filled with wine so that there was room only for a very moderate

admixture of water, while hard by there stood a flagon with mouth cut wide and smooth and most apt for the drawing of wine.

I had scarcely sat me down upon my bed when lo! 16
my darling Fotis entered the room, her mistress now being safe in bed. Her face shone with joy and roses hung garlanded or wandering at their sweet will about her shapely bosom. She caught me to her arms, kissed me, set wreaths about my brow and sprinkled me with flowers. Then she took up a goblet and pouring hot water on the wine gave me to drink. Before I had quite drunk it to the last drop she laid gentle hands upon it and slowly with her own fair lips drained what was left, and as she sipped it cast sweet glances at me. A second and a third cup followed, with many others, all of which we drank turn and turn about. Thus we 17
made merry, and many were the evenings afterwards that we passed in like enjoyment.

Now it chanced that one day Byrrena gave me the 18
most pressing invitation to come to a dinner party at her house, where, she said, I should meet pleasant company. I begged her earnestly to have me excused, but she would not hear of my absence. So I had to approach Fotis and consult her sovereign will as though it had been an oracle. Although she was unwilling that I should stray a hair's-breadth from her side, she graciously gave me brief leave of absence. But 'Take care', said she, 'that you come home in good time. For our young nobles have a way of going about in riotous gangs and disturbing the public peace. You

will see the corpses of their victims lying here and there about all the open spaces in the town. The troops of the governor are stationed too far off to do anything to relieve the town from this intolerable affliction. Your wealth and rank, together with the fact that you are a stranger and may be treated with contempt, are only too likely to lead them to waylay you.'

'Set your mind at rest, my darling Fotis,' I replied; 'I should never think of preferring a dinner party to your sweet company. But in any case I will relieve your anxiety by returning early. I am not going unaccompanied. My good comrade, my sword, shall hang at my side, so that I shall carry about me means to ensure my safety.'

Thus equipped I went off to dine.

19 I found a large company of guests, the very flower in fact of the citizens, as was only to be expected in the house of so distinguished a lady. Exquisite tables of shining ivory and sandalwood were there, couches spread with coverlets of cloth of gold and great beakers diverse in beauty, but alike in costliness. Here was glass cunningly engraven, there crystal without flaw, and there again bright silver and flashing gold, amber hollowed in wondrous wise, gems cut so that you might drink out of them, and all manner of impossible marvels. Numbers of waiters in splendid liveries deftly handed round dishes amply laden, and boys with curly locks and fair raiment continually plied us with old wine in cups wrought out of single stones of great price. And now the lights were brought in, conversation became

general all round the table, with free laughter and courteous jest and banter bandied to and fro.

Byrrena turned to me and said, 'Do you find life in our town enjoyable? As far as I know, there is no city can compare with us for temples, baths, and other public buildings, while we are quite famous for the richness of the vessels we use at table. I can assure you, too, that here the man of leisure may have freedom to do what he will, the man of business that visits us may find bustling throngs worthy of Rome, and the stranger of quiet tastes may enjoy all the repose of a country villa. In fact, we are the pleasure-resort of the whole province.' To this I replied, 'What you say is true. I do not think I have ever found greater freedom than here. But I am haunted by a great fear—fear of the dark snares of art magic that none may escape. For even the tombs of the dead, they say, are not safe, but your witches are ever in quest of fragments of the dead from pyres and sepulchres and of slices hacked from corpses to work destruction on the living. And at the very moment of the funeral procession your spell-wives are swift as lightning to snatch the body before others can bury it.' At this one of the company added, 'That is not all. Here they have no mercy even for the living. There was a man who had a horrible experience of such a kind. They mutilated his face and disfigured it completely.'

At these words the guests burst one and all into wild laughter; every face, every eye was turned to one of the guests reclined apart in a corner of the room.

Confounded by the persistence with which the company stared at him, he muttered angrily and would have left the room. 'My dear Thelyphron,' interposed Byrrena, 'sit down and stay a little longer and with your usual kindness tell us your story yet once again, that Lucius here, whom I love as my own son, may have the benefit of your courtesy and wit.'

To this he made answer, 'Byrrena, you are always goodness and consideration itself, but there are some persons whose insolence is unbearable.' He spoke with deep feeling. But Byrrena urged her point, conjured him as he loved his life to speak, and at length despite his reluctance induced him to comply with her request.

21 He drew the coverings of the couch into a heap, propped himself on his elbow, and sitting half erect stretched out his right hand after the manner of orators. The little and third fingers were pressed against the palm, the other two extended, while the thumb was raised as though in menace. Then with a gentle smile[1] he began his tale.

'I left Miletus while still a minor with the purpose of seeing the Olympic games. I wished also to visit this portion of the famous Province of Achaia and, after travelling through all Thessaly, I came in an evil hour to the town of Larissa. In the course of my wanderings I had reduced my journey money to a very low ebb, and while I was seeking how I might find some remedy for my poverty I perceived in the midst

[1] *subridens* (Pricaeus).

of the marketplace an old man of great stature. He was standing on a block of stone and was crying with a loud voice, "If any man is willing to watch a corpse, let him name his price." I addressed a passer-by and said, "What is this that I hear? are your corpses in the habit of running away?" "Hush!" said he; "you are a mere boy and a complete stranger, and don't realize that you are in Thessaly, where it is the commonest thing for witches to gnaw the faces of the dead, to procure the necessary ingredients for their magical charms!" "Tell me, pray," said I, "what are the 22
conditions of the watching by the dead, which you require?" "In the first place," he replied, "you must watch the whole night long with the utmost care; you must never close your eyes even to wink, but must keep them continually fixed upon the corpse, never turning them away from it or even half-askance. For these accursed witches can change their skin and assume the shape of whatever animal they please, and thus disguised creep up to the corpse. Even the eyes of the sun and of justice are not sharp enough to detect them: for they put on the likeness of birds, dogs, and mice, or even of flies. Again, by means of their fearful spells they drown the watchers in sleep. Indeed, it is impossible to tell all the secret devices that these abandoned women contrive to win their wicked will. And yet all they gain by such ghastly work is never more than from four to six pieces of gold. Ah! but I had almost forgotten. If in the morning it is found that the least portion of the corpse has been filched or

stolen away, the watcher is compelled to replace it by cutting a portion from his own face."

23 When I heard this, I nerved myself and straightway approached the crier. "You may stop your crying," I said; "here is one who is ready to watch. Give me the fee."

"You will receive a thousand sesterces," he replied. "But take care, young man. The corpse is that of the son of one of the chief men of the town. Mind you keep it safe and sound from these cursed harpies." "Oh," said I, "this story of yours is the wildest trash! Stuff and nonsense! I am a man of iron nerve and sleep has no power over me. I am all eyes, and even Lynceus or Argus had not sight as keen as mine."

I had scarce finished when he led me to a house. The front door was closed and he bade me enter by a small entrance at the back. He then entered a darkened room with closed shutters. In it I saw a lady clad all in black and dissolved in tears. He stood beside her and said, "Here is a man who has engaged to watch your husband's body and enters upon his task with confidence." She swept aside the hair that hung in front of her eyes, revealing a face that was fair even in its grief. She eyed me and said, "See that you perform your duty with the utmost vigilance." "Set your mind at rest," I replied. "All I ask is an adequate reward."

24 She agreed to my terms, and rising led me to another room, wherein lay the body swathed in a fair white shroud. Then, after summoning seven witnesses to

view the corpse, she withdrew the face-cloth and for a long time did naught save weep over the dead. Ceasing at last, she adjured those present to deal faithfully by her and anxiously pointed out each feature of the dead, while one took down a formal inventory on his tablets. "See," she said, "the nose is entire, the eyes uninjured, the ears complete, the lips unscathed, the chin still firm. Good citizens, I bid you take careful note." She said no more; a seal was affixed to the tablets and she made as though to leave the room.

I interposed and said, "Madam, I beg you to give orders that I may be provided with all such things as are necessary for my watch." "What do you require?" she said. "A large lamp," I replied, "with oil enough to last till daylight, several flagons of wine together with some warm water, a cup, and a plate of broken meats from your table." She shook her head. "Be off, you impudent fellow!" she said. "Why do you ask to be provided with a regular dinner in this house of sorrow, where no fire has been kindled these many days? Do you imagine you have come here to make a night of it? Why do not you rather weep and show such signs of grief as befit your situation?" As she spoke she looked round for her maidservant and added, "Myrrhinè, quick! fetch a lamp and some oil. Then leave the room and lock in the watcher."

So I was left alone to keep the dead man good 25
company. I rubbed my eyes to arm them for their watch and strove to calm the agitation of my mind by singing to myself. And now it was twilight, then

twilight grew to dark, the night grew deep and deeper yet, till all men had laid them down to rest, and at last it was the dead of midnight. My fear too waxed apace, when suddenly a weasel crept into the room and stopped in front of me and cast a piercing glance upon me. Such extraordinary self-confidence in a beast of so puny a size struck terror to my soul. At last I cried to it, "Be off, foul beast, and hide yourself among your like, the rats, before you feel the force of my arm, as you shall feel it right soon! Be off with you!" It turned its back and forthwith left the room. Almost immediately I was plunged into the nethermost abyss of deep slumber, so that not even the god of Delphi himself could easily have told, as we lay there, which of us was the more dead. So lifeless was I and so much in need of someone else to watch me, that I might as well not have been there at all.

26 The voice of the crested fowl was already singing a truce to night, when at length I woke and in an extremity of terror rushed to the corpse. I placed the light near, drew back the cerecloth and closely examined every feature of that face. All were there. Suddenly the poor widow burst weeping into the room, accompanied by the witnesses of the previous evening. She was in a fever of anxiety and straightway threw herself upon the corpse and, after kissing it again and again, examined it in the lamplight and found each feature in its place. She turned away and asked for Philodespotus her steward and bade him without delay pay so excellent a watcher his fee. Then, as soon as

I had received it, she said, "Young man, I thank you fervently and—heaven be my witness—I shall count you henceforth among the number of my friends in gratitude for your zealous service."

My unexpected gains threw me into an ecstasy. I stared enchanted at the shining pieces of gold, which I kept turning over in my hand, and answered her thus: "Madam, count me as one of your household and command my services as often as you require them."

The words were scarcely out of my mouth when the servants rushed at me, cursing me for my ill-omened words and striking me with every manner of weapon. One drove his fists against my jaws, another jammed his elbows into my shoulder-blades, others dug their hands viciously into my ribs, kicked me, tore my hair, and rent my garments. And so, mutilated and torn like the haughty youth Adonis or the Pimplean minstrel, I was cast out of the house.

While I was recovering myself in a neighbouring 27
square, I called to mind the ill-omened and thoughtless words I had used and readily admitted to myself that I deserved a yet worse beating than I had actually received, when lo! the last lament having been made and the last farewell uttered, the corpse was borne forth to burial and, in accordance with the national custom, was carried through the marketplace with all the pomp of a public funeral, as befitted a man of his rank. An old man ran up to the side of the dead, his face was sorrowful and bathed in tears, he tore his

comely gray hairs and, casting both arms about the bier, cried in a loud voice, broken by repeated sobs, "I implore you, citizens, as you love the truth and the honour of your state, avenge your fellow-citizen's death and inflict stern punishment on that abandoned and wicked woman for the abominable crime she has committed. For she it was and no other poisoned that unhappy young man, my sister's son, that she might please her lover and lay hands on her husband's inheritance."

Thus did that old man din his lamentable complaint into the ears of each man he met. Meanwhile the crowd grew angry, for the plausibility of his accusation made them believe it true. They called for fire, they looked for stones, they hounded on the street urchins[1] to kill the woman. But she with feigned tears appealed to all the gods of heaven in the most solemn manner and denied her guilt.

28 To this the old man replied, "Let us refer the question to the decision of the divine providence, which shall make known the truth. There is a certain Egyptian here, named Zatchlas, a prophet of the first order, who some time since agreed with me, on promise of a large reward, for a brief space to revive the dead man that lies before you, and to recall his spirit from the underworld, though he has crossed the threshold of death." As he spoke he led forward into our midst a young man clad in linen robes; sandals of palm were on his feet, and his head was close shaven. The old man kissed his hand repeatedly and embracing

[1] *parvulos* (MSS.).

his knees said, "Have pity, O priest, have pity! I implore you by the stars of heaven and the powers of hell, by all nature's elements, by the silence of night, by the shrines of Coptos, by the rising of the Nile, by the mysteries of Memphis and the *sistra* of Pharos, give to this dead man a moment's enjoyment of the sun and shed a little light on these eyes that are closed for ever. We make no resistance, we deny not earth her due, 'tis only a brief space of life we ask, that he may have the consolation that vengeance brings."

The prophet at this entreaty placed a certain small herb upon the mouth of the corpse and another on his breast. Then turning to the east he made silent supplication to the great sun as he climbed the skies. The spectators were deeply stirred by the tragic dignity of his action and were all on fire with expectation of the great marvel that was to be.

I made myself one of the crowd and took my stand 29
on a large stone behind the bier, whence I witnessed everything with curious eyes. The breast began to heave, the veins to pulse with life, the body to be filled with breath. The corpse sat up and the young man spoke. "Why, I entreat you, have you recalled me, who have drunk the cup of Lethe and was floating on the sluggish waves of Styx, to perform for this brief moment the functions of life? Cease, I implore you, cease, and let me take my rest."

Such were the words we heard from the lips of the dead. But the prophet when he heard cried with anger in his voice, "Why dost thou not tell the people all and

shed light upon the mystery of thy death? Dost thou think I cannot invoke the Furies by my spells? Dost thou think that there is no power now can torture thy weary limbs?"

The dead man gave answer from the bier and with a deep groan made his appeal to the people. "I perished by the evil guile of my new-wedded bride. Slain by her poisoned cup, I have yielded up to an adulterer the couch of marriage, still warm from our embrace."

At that his admirable wife summoned all her audacity to her aid and—so lost was she to honour—wrangled with her husband, rebutting his accusations. The crowd surged with excitement; men took sides, some crying that the wicked woman should be buried alive with the body of her husband, others that the corpse lied and was unworthy of belief.

30 But the next utterance of the young man removed all their doubts. Once more he gave a groan yet deeper than before and said, "I will give you sure proof that I speak the truth and nothing but the truth. For I will show forth to you most clearly that which is known to no other soul alive." Then, pointing his finger at me, he proceeded: "While this sagacious guardian of my dead body was keeping sharp watch over me, certain spellwives, who coveted my dead body and to that end assumed strange shapes, made many futile efforts to cheat his persistent watchfulness, but all in vain. At last therefore they cast a cloud of sleep upon him, drowned him in deep slumber, and began to call me by my name. Nor did they cease until my chill members

and death-drowsed limbs with slow and painful efforts began to obey their spells. But this man, who still lived and was but sleeping,[1] though his sleep was like to death, all unwitting rose at the sound of his name—for he chanced to be called by the same name as myself—and ghostlike walked mechanically to the door of the room, and there, though it was fast barred, suffered the mutilation intended for myself. For they made use of a chink in the door to lop off first his nose and then his ears. And that his appearance might not betray their theft, they moulded ears of wax exactly resembling those that had been lopped away. In like fashion they made him a counterfeit nose and attached both nose and ears exactly where the originals had been. And now here stands the poor wretch. No recompense for vigilance is his. His sole reward is mutilation."

Terrified by his words, I began to feel my features. I placed my hand to my nose and grasped it. It came away! I handled my ears. They fell off! All present pointed at me with their fingers or turned their heads and nodded at me. Wild laughter broke out and I crept away among the feet of those who stood round, bathed in the cold sweat of terror. I had no heart to return to the home of my fathers, a poor mutilated laughing-stock. But I let my hair grow long and hang down on either side to conceal the wounds where my ears had been, and veiled as best I might the foul mutilation of my nose with this linen cloth, which I wear close pressed upon it.'

[1] Omitting *non*.

31 As soon as Thelyphron had finished his story his fellow-guests, now mellow with wine, renewed their laughter and, while they were clamouring for the usual toast to be drunk to the god of laughter, Byrrena said to me: 'To-morrow, according to a custom dating from the city's infancy, is a solemn feast-day peculiar to ourselves on which we propitiate the most holy god of laughter with cheerful and joyous ritual. Your presence here will increase our pleasure in the feast, and I hope your mother wit may produce some good jest in the god's honour, that so great a deity may receive yet richer and fuller offering from us than usual.'

'Good!' I replied; 'it shall be as you bid me. For, by Hercules, I should be right glad to find some merry matter worthy the full acceptance of so great a god.' After I had said this my servant told me that the night was already late; so I rose at once, my head, like others', full of the fumes of wine, wished Byrrena all prosperity,[1] and started homewards with reeling gait.

32 On reaching the first open space, a sudden gust of wind blew out the torch on which we relied to light our way, so that we had the greatest difficulty in extricating ourselves from this sudden darkness. We kept bruising our toes against the stones, and found our homegoing a most fatiguing process. As we approached the house arm in arm, three sturdy fellows of huge stature hurled themselves against our door with all their might. They showed not the slightest alarm at our appearance, but redoubled their efforts, vying one with another in the

[1] *prospere* MSS.

violence of their onslaught. Naturally enough both of us, more especially myself, took them to be robbers of the most ferocious character. I immediately drew my sword, which I had taken with me hidden in the folds of my cloak, as a precaution against such an encounter, and without hesitation dashed into the robbers' midst. As each closed with me I plunged my sword deep into his body, till all of them lay dead at my feet, riddled with many a gaping wound. The noise of the combat roused Fotis; she opened the door and I crept in breathless and dripping with sweat, and, feeling no less fatigued by my conflict with these three robbers than if I had been engaged in the slaying of Geryon, I went to bed and fell fast asleep.

BOOK III

1 THE dawn had just set forth to climb the skies; with rosy arm she shook the reins and the frontlets of her steeds glowed red in the east. Then night surrendered me to day and I was torn from my peaceful slumbers. The memory of the deed I had done last night rushed upon my mind and with it came an agony of terror. As I sat on my bed cross-legged, with my hands clasped and fingers intertwined across my knees, I wept floods of tears, for in my mind's eye I saw myself arraigned before the tribunal in the marketplace, condemned by the judge, and even given over to the executioner. 'Is it likely,' I thought, 'that I shall meet with any judge so mild and merciful as to pronounce me innocent, stained as I am with the life-blood of three slain men and drenched in the gore of so many citizens? Behold the renown Diophanes the Chaldaean promised me so persistently as the outcome of my journeyings.'

Again and again I turned over these thoughts in my
2 mind, bewailing my evil plight. Meanwhile, our doors began to be shaken from without and shouts loud and continued resounded at our gate. I had not long to wait; the portals were flung open and a large crowd burst into the house, so that the whole place was filled by the magistrates and their attendants and a miscella-

neous swarm of folk that thronged in with them. Two lictors immediately laid hands on me by order of the magistrates and began to drag me away. I made no resistance. Scarcely had we reached the mouth of our alley, when straightway every citizen in the place poured forth into the open air and followed us in a compact throng of extraordinary size. Although I walked with my head bowed earthward, nay, bowed even to hell for misery, I yet perceived from the corner of my eye a thing that caused me to marvel exceedingly. Thousands thronged about me and every one of them was convulsed with laughter. I was led from square to square, from corner to corner, like the victims who are led round about the town with rites of purification to avert disasters threatened by portents. At last I was brought into the marketplace and set before the judgement seat that stands therein. The magistrates took their places on a lofty platform and the herald was already calling for silence when the people began to shout like one man and to demand that so important a trial should be transferred to the theatre; for the multitude was so great and so tightly packed that the situation was positively dangerous. Their request was granted on the spot, and the crowd rushed pell-mell to the theatre and filled the whole enclosure of the auditorium with marvellous celerity: even the entrances and every inch of the roof were crammed with compact masses of spectators. Many twined their arms about columns, others hung from statues, some peered, half-seen, through the windows and

skylights; for all were so eager to see what should follow that they showed the utmost disregard of their personal safety. The officers of justice then led me across the stage as though I had been some sacrificial victim and placed me in the centre of the orchestra.
3 Once more the herald lifted up his voice and in stentorian tones summoned the accuser. An elderly man rose to his feet, a bowl perforated with a slender orifice like a funnel was filled with water, which fell drop by drop to mark the period allotted for his speech, and he began to address the people as follows:

'Most virtuous citizens, the matter in hand is one of no small importance; the peace and tranquillity of the whole state are involved and it will be well if we take it seriously to heart. It is therefore all the more important that individually and collectively you should show the utmost zeal in defence of the public honour, that this abandoned homicide may not escape unpunished after his cruel and brutal butchery of so many persons. It is no private enmity, I assure you, no personal hatred that makes me so vehement in this cause. I am the officer in charge of the night watch, and I think that till to-day no one can bring any charge against me, for I have been zealous and most vigilant in the exercise of my office. I will now set forth to you the case itself and tell you what took place last night with scrupulous accuracy. It was about the third watch and I was going my round of the town from door to door, taking the most watchful note of everything. Suddenly I saw this brutal young man

with drawn sword dealing death to right and left of him. Three had already fallen victims to his fury and lay at his feet still breathing, their bodies quivering in pools of blood. He himself was not unmoved by the awful crime he had committed. His guilty conscience pricked him, he broke away and under cover of darkness escaped into a house where he lay concealed all night. But thanks be to providence, which suffers not men to escape the punishment of their sins, before he could slip away in secret I was ready for him betimes and had him brought before your austere and most august tribunal. There he stands, black with the guilt of so many murders; there he stands, who was caught red-handed in the very deed; there he stands, a stranger, our city's guest. Do not hesitate to cast your votes against an alien for a crime which you would punish with severity even in a fellow-citizen.'

After my accuser had thus delivered himself with 4
the utmost vigour and in tones that echoed through the theatre, he relapsed into silence. The herald then straightway bade me begin my defence, if I had anything to say in answer to the charge. At first I could do nothing save weep. But it was not, by Hercules, the fierceness of his accusation, but my own guilty conscience that called forth my tears. Nevertheless I succeeded, heaven knows how, in recovering my courage, and thus made answer:—

'I am only too well aware how hard it is for one accused of murder, however true his words, however frank his admission of the deed, to persuade so vast

a concourse of citizens that he is innocent, when they see before them the dead bodies of the three citizens whom he has slain. Still if you of your kindness will give me hearing, I can easily prove to you that I do not deserve to stand here in peril of my life, but that it is the unpremeditated outcome of my reasonable anger which makes me the guiltless object of the deep execration awakened by the charge preferred against me. I was returning somewhat late from a dinner party—a little the worse for liquor, I may add, for I will not attempt to conceal the only real charge that can be brought against me—and I had just reached my host's house—I should tell you that I am staying with the worthy Milo, your fellow-citizen. At that moment I saw some brutal robbers trying to force an entrance by tearing the door of the house from its hinges and wrenching away the bolts with which it was carefully barred; they were plotting the death of all who dwelt within. One of them, who was more ready of hand and more huge of stature than his comrades, was inciting the others with exhortations, such words as these, "Come, my boys, let us attack them with all the courage of heroes and the vigour of strength, for they are all asleep. Away with delay! banish all thought of fear from your breasts! Let slaughter walk sword in hand through every chamber of the house! Who sleeps shall be butchered where he lies, who struggles to resist shall be struck down. If we leave none in all the house alive, our return in triumph becomes a certainty." I will admit, citizens, that

thinking it my duty as a good citizen and being in the utmost terror both for the safety of my host and of myself, I drew my good sword that I had taken with me to guard me against perils such as this, and attempted to frighten these abandoned robbers away and put them to flight. But those barbarous and savage ruffians had no mind to fly and, though they saw that I had my weapon in my hand, made the most determined resistance. They set their battle in array and the leader, the 6
standardbearer of the gang, attacked me with all his might; seized my hair in both hands, bent my head back, and would have dashed my brains out with a stone. While he was calling to his comrades to hand him one, I gave him a well-directed thrust and had the luck to lay him low. Another had caught hold of my feet and was clinging to them like grim death, when I drove my blade through his shoulders, while I spitted the third full in the breast as he rushed unwarily upon me. Having by these means restored peace, preserved my hosts' house, and done a service to the public safety, I thought that, far from being punished, I should receive the thanks of the state. For I have never before been accused even of the least crime, but have proved myself a good and true man to all that know me, and ever set innocence of life above all my worldly interests. Nor can I imagine why I should be indicted for having wreaked my just anger upon the most abandoned robbers. No one can show that I had previously been at strife with them, nor even that I had ever set eyes on them; nor can it be shown that they

had any booty in their possession which could be supposed to have tempted me to commit such a crime.'

7 Such was my defence. Then, with outstretched hands, and tears streaming from my eyes, I made piteous appeal to all and several in the name of public clemency and all they held most dear in the world, to spare me. When I thought them all sufficiently stirred with compassion and moved to pity by my tears, I called the all-seeing eyes of Justice and the sun to witness that I spoke truth, and commended my lamentable case to the care of heaven. But on looking up I saw that the whole people was dissolved in uproarious laughter, not excepting my good host and kinsman Milo, who was likewise convulsed with uncontrollable merriment. Then said I to myself, 'There's a loyal and conscientious friend for you! I have slain men to save my host, I have been brought into court to answer a charge of murder, and he, not content with refraining from all offers of assistance, is roaring with laughter at the thought of my imminent destruction.'

8 Meanwhile a woman rushed through the midst of the theatre; she wept and made moan, was clad all in black and bore a babe in her arms. Behind her came an old woman covered with squalid rags, as sad as she, and likewise dissolved in tears. Both waved boughs of olive in their hands and, standing about the bier on which lay the bodies of the dead beneath a shroud, set up a cry of lamentation and, wailing their sad fate in mournful accents, cried, 'By the public clemency, by the common rights of humanity, we beseech you, pity

these innocent youths so foully slain; deal vengeance, console our lonely widowhood. At least aid the sad plight of this poor babe thus orphaned in his infancy and satisfy the claims of your laws and of public order by taking this ruffian's blood!'

At this the senior magistrate of the city rose from his chair and thus addressed the people: 'Even the author of the crime for which it is our duty to exact stern vengeance cannot deny his guilt. But there remains one minor duty that we must perform. We must discover the accomplices of the crime. It is scarcely likely that one man alone should have escaped the onslaught of three such sturdy young men. We must extract the truth by torture. The slave who accompanied him escaped unnoticed, so that we have no alternative but to put him to the question and force him to denounce the partners of his guilt, that we may rid ourselves of the terror inspired by so dangerous a gang.'

Forthwith, in accordance with Greek custom, fire 9
and the wheel and every manner of scourge were brought in. My despair increased, nay was doubled at the thought that mutilation was to be added to the horrors of death. But the old woman, who had made such an impression by her lamentations, cried, 'Stay, most excellent citizens; before you crucify that ruffian, the murderer of my poor children, suffer the corpses to be exposed to your view, that the sight of their beauty and their youth may heighten your just indignation and create such fury in you as the crime deserves.'

Her words were received with applause, and forthwith the magistrate bade me with my own hands uncover the corpses lying on the bier. In spite of my struggles and my reluctance to revive the memory of my dreadful deed by revealing it afresh, the lictors at the magistrate's bidding compelled me perforce, thrust forth my hand from where it hung by my side and extended it over the very bodies of the dead to be the instrument of its own doom. At length, of sheer necessity I yielded; unwillingly I tore aside the shroud and revealed the bodies. Good God, what a sight was there! What a portent! What a sudden reversal of my fortunes! But a moment since I had been consigned to be Orcus's bondman and a slave in the household of Proserpine, and now the whole aspect of affairs was changed. I stood dumbstruck and astounded, nor can I find words adequate to describe the impression made by the strange sight that met my eyes. For the corpses of the men I had slain were but three wineskins that had been filled with air! They were pierced by several gashes and, when I recalled my last night's combat, I saw that they gaped exactly in the places where I had wounded those robbers.

Thereupon the laughter to which some had already given way, but which had of set purpose been kept under some restraint, spread wildly and uncontrolled to all at large. Some in the extravagance of their amusement congratulated me, others held their hands to their stomachs to ease their aching sides. Every one was beside himself with merriment and fixed his eyes on me as he left the theatre. But I, from the moment

I laid my hands on the pall, stood as one turned to stone, cold and motionless as one of the statues or columns of the theatre. Nor did I return to life till Milo my host came up to me, and laying hold of me with gentle violence led me away in spite of my resistance, while the tears sprang forth anew from my eyes and frequent sobs shook my frame. Selecting the most unfrequented streets, he conducted me to his house by a circuitous route, attempting by various consolatory speeches to allay the grief and terror in which I was still plunged. But all his efforts were in vain; nothing could assuage my indignation at the insulting treatment I had received, for it had burned deep into my spirit.

Immediately on my arrival, lo and behold! the 11
magistrates themselves with all the pomp of their office entered our house and strove to appease me by offering explanations. 'We are not ignorant, most excellent Lucius, either of your own worth or of the stock of which you come. For the fame and lofty lineage of your family is known to the whole province. Not even the treatment which you resent so bitterly should be regarded as an insult. Banish therefore all sorrow from your heart, we beseech you, and lay aside the anguish of your soul. For the sport, by which we annually do solemn honour to Laughter, merriest of gods, owes its success, as each occasion comes round, to the invention of fresh jests. Moreover, the god's blessing will ever go with him that has wakened Laughter and done him service; his love will never leave you, nor will he suffer you to endure heartfelt

sorrow, but he will place a crown of undying joy about your brow and set upon it the seal of unruffled beauty. And in return for your service the whole city has bestowed high honour upon you. It has inscribed your name among the roll of its patrons and decreed that your statue should be set up in bronze.' To this I replied, 'Most glorious city, thou paragon of Thessalian towns, I give thee due thanks for doing me such honour, but I must beg that such honours as portraits and statues be reserved for worthier and greater men than myself!'

12 After I had made this modest reply I became a little more cheerful and the smile returned to my face. I strove as far as I could to assume a happier appearance and bade the magistrates a courteous farewell. Next a servant arrived in haste and said, 'Your kinswoman Byrrena invites you to her house and reminds you that the hour for the dinner, to which last night you promised to come, is near at hand.' His words filled me with terror: I could not endure even the thought of Byrrena's house. I therefore replied, 'I wish I could oblige you, kinswoman, but I cannot do so without breaking an engagement. For my host Milo besought, by the great deity whose feast it is to-day, that I would sup with him this night. I consented and gave him my promise. And now he will not leave me nor suffer me to leave him. So let me put off the fulfilment of my promise to dine with you to some later occasion.'

While I was still speaking Milo took me firmly by the hand and, bidding the bath-slaves follow, led me

to the nearest bath. Shunning the eyes of all and shrinking from the laughter of those that met me, laughter of which I myself was the cause, I walked beside my host, hiding myself from view. Nor for very shame can I remember how I washed or rubbed myself down or how I returned homeward; the eyes, the nods, and the pointing fingers of all marked me down, my spirit was distraught, and I was utterly confounded.

13 I hurriedly consumed the miserable supper provided by Milo, and alleging that the floods of tears that I had shed had brought on a racking headache, begged him to excuse me. My request was readily granted and I retired to bed. Then flinging myself down upon my couch, dejectedly I recalled to my mind all the events of the day. I was interrupted by the arrival of my beloved Fotis, who had persuaded her mistress to go to bed. She was quite unlike herself, for instead of her usual merry smile and saucy speech, her face wore an aspect of profound gloom and a frown wrinkled her brow. With hesitating and timid utterance she said, 'I have a confession to make. I myself was the cause of your discomfiture to-day.' With the words she produced a leathern thong from her bosom and handed it to me. 'Take it,' she said, 'I beg you, and revenge yourself upon a faithless wench. Nay, inflict if you will some even heavier punishment. But do not think, I beseech you, that I was the deliberate author of your affliction. God forbid that even the least annoyance should be yours on my account. Nay, if

any danger threaten your safety, I would gladly shed my lifeblood to avert it. But, alas! that which I was bidden to do for quite another purpose, turned by some malignant chance to your hurt.'

14 These words awakened my habitual curiosity, and desiring to discover the secret cause of my misfortune I began thus: 'That thong, which you gave me to scourge you with, is the vilest and most audacious of all things that are. Sooner shall it be cut and torn by me till it is utterly destroyed, than touch your skin that is soft as down and white as milk. But tell me truly. What was this deed of yours that the perversity of Fortune turned to my undoing? For I swear by your sweet head that I could never believe any one, not even yourself, who told me that you had ever conceived anything that should do me a hurt. The issues of chance are uncertain, and even though they fall out ill, they cannot make a crime of what was done with innocent intent.'

When I had finished speaking, I began to kiss my sweet Fotis on the eyes. My kisses lingered greedily and long and I drank a deep draught of bliss from those sweet half-shut eyes, moist and languishing and all a-tremble with love for me.

15 This turned all her sorrow to joy. 'Suffer me,' she said, 'suffer me first, I beseech you, to bar the doors of the chamber with all care lest, if my words be heard without, the profane freedom of my speech be accounted a heinous crime.' With the words she shut to the bolts and drove in the cross-pin till all was fast. Then

turning to me she cast both her hands about my neck and in hushed whispering accents said: 'I am afraid, I am afraid to reveal the close mysteries of this house and to disclose the hidden secrets of my mistress. But I am emboldened by your character and learning; for not only were you born of lofty lineage, not only have you the supreme gifts of genius, but you have been initiated into many mysteries and have learned to value the sanctity of silence. Wherefore whatsoever I commit to the inmost shrine of your pious spirit, keep it, I pray, locked within the chambers of your soul, and reward the confiding simplicity of my story by the persistence of your silence. For the love that binds my heart to yours compels me to reveal to you what I alone of mortals know. And now you shall learn the nature of this household, you shall learn the wondrous secrets of my mistress, secrets which command the obedience of the shades, disturb the courses of the stars, compel the gods to her will and the elements to her service. Never does she put greater confidence in the fierce might of her art than when, as often happens, she delights her eyes with the sight of some handsome youth. She is now madly in love with a young Boeo- 16
tian of surpassing beauty, and passionately plies every resource, every device of magic to win him. I heard her last evening, I heard her, I tell you, with these very ears, threatening to plunge the Sun in cloudy darkness and perpetual gloom, because he had not hastened from the sky more swiftly than his wont and had not yielded place to night at an earlier hour, that magic might have

power to ply its spells. When she was returning from the bath yesterday, she chanced to see this youth sitting at a barber's shop, and bade me secretly carry off some of the hairs that had been severed from his head by the scissors'-blade and were lying upon the ground. I began to gather them with furtive care, when the barber came upon me. Now we are quite notorious through all the city for the practice of the black art; he laid hold of me therefore and rated me shrewdly. "You abandoned wench, you are always stealing away hair cut from the head of some fine young gentleman. You must stop it at once. It's a black crime, and if you don't cease your tricks, I shall hand you over to the magistrates without more ado." He suited the action to the word, thrust his hand into my bosom, searched there, and seizing the hair I had concealed, angrily snatched it away. His action dismayed me. I remembered my mistress's temper. Such mishaps make her wild with anger and she generally gives me a cruel beating. I contemplated flight. But then I thought of you and forthwith abandoned my design.

17 I was departing gloomily from the spot, when I saw a man clipping some wineskins of goat's-hide with his shears. I watched him blow them out, tie them carefully, and hang them up. Then to avoid returning empty-handed, I picked up several yellow locks which were lying on the ground and in point of colour closely resembled the hair of the young Boeotian. Taking them home I gave them to my mistress, telling her not a word of what had really happened. And so it came about that

soon after nightfall, before your return from dinner, my mistress Pamphile, her heart distraught with passion, ascended to a wooden shelter on the roof, situated on the far side of the house. It is exposed to the four winds of heaven through all its length and breadth, and lies open to every quarter of the sky, east and west and south and north. This she employs in secret for the practice of her magical arts, for which it is well suited. First she began to array her hellish laboratory with its usual equipment, aromatic herbs of every kind, metal plates inscribed with characters that none might read, the remains of ill-omened birds, fragments torn from corpses as they lay bewept upon the bier, and many a limb snatched even from the sepulchred dead. Here were noses and fingers, there nails from the gibbet, to which the flesh still clung; there was blood too of slain men that she had preserved, and splintered skulls torn from the fangs of wild beasts. First she chanted a spell 18
over still quivering entrails, then made offering of various liquids, water from the fountain, milk from the cow, honey from the hill and poured libations of mead. Last, when she had twined and twisted those locks of hair and knotted them fast together, she threw them together with much sweet perfume upon the live coals that they might be consumed. Thereat, compelled by the irresistible powers of her magic and the invisible force of the deities she had constrained to her will, those bodies whose locks were smoking and crackling in the flame borrowed human breath, and felt and heard and walked and followed the call of the reek sent forth by their burning hair; it

was not the Boeotian youth, but these that desired entrance and leapt against the doors. And then, lo and behold! you came reeling with drink and, deceived by the blind darkness of the night, drew your sword like Ajax when he went mad, and so armed did a far braver deed than his. For he found his foe among living cattle and butchered whole herds, but you cut short the breath of three inflated goatskins that I might now take you to my arms triumphant over your foes, with never a stain of blood upon you, the slayer not of men but of wineskins.'

19 I applauded Fotis's wit and began to jest in my turn. 'Yes!' said I, 'and I might compare this the first trophy of my valour with one of the twelve labours of Hercules, setting my slaying of three wineskins against his conquest of Geryon with his three bodies, or Cerberus with his three heads. But if you would have me forgive and forget all your offence and the anguish wherein you involved me, grant me the height of my desire, and show me your mistress when she is performing some supernatural feat of magic, when she is invoking the gods, or at least when she changes into some strange shape,[1] so that I may see her with my own eyes. For I am consumed with a burning desire to confront magic face to face and learn what it may be, although you yourself seem to me to be neither ignorant nor unskilled in these matters. Yes, I know and feel that it is so. For you with your bright eyes and rosy cheeks, your shining hair, your lips parted for a kiss, your perfumed bosom, have

[1] *cum reformatur* (Elmenhorst).

made me, who have ever despised the love of great ladies, your slave and bondsman, and I am content with my chains. Home has lost its charms for me, and I would not now return, for I set your embraces above all else in the world.'

'Lucius,' she replied, 'how gladly I would grant 20
your desire! But my mistress has a surly temper and is wont moreover to retire into solitude and shun all witness when she would perform her mysteries. But I will count the peril as naught compared with your desire. I will watch for a suitable opportunity and will diligently perform what you demand. Only, as I said at the beginning, you must keep a discreet silence as to what you see; it is a serious enterprise.'

Thus did we hold converse and then retiring to bed slept till it was already high day. Some days later 21
Fotis hastened to me, trembling with excitement, and told me that her mistress, having failed to advance her passion by any of the arts she had employed, purposed the next night to assume the feathers of a bird and thus fly to her beloved. She bade me prepare myself to behold this marvel; only I must be prudent. Accordingly, about the first watch of the night, she led me on tiptoe with noiseless footfall to that upper chamber and bade me look through a chink in the door. This was what I saw. Pamphile first divested herself of all her clothing and then opening a casket took forth from it a number of small boxes. Removing the lid of one of these she produced an ointment from it, with which, after rubbing it well between her

hands, she smeared herself all over from the tips of her toes to the hair of her crown. Then, after holding long and mysterious converse with her lamp, she began to shake all her limbs with a quivering motion. As they swayed gently to and fro, soft down began to sprout from them, strong wings began to grow upon her, her nose became hard and beaked, and her nails curved into talons. Pamphile was transformed into an owl! Thereupon, emitting a shrill querulous cry, she entrusted herself to the perils of the air, rose slowly from the ground, and at last towered on high and flew forth with all the strength of her pinions.

22 Now whereas she had deliberately transformed herself by her magic arts, I without the aid of any spells or incantations seemed to become something new and strange, which, whatever it might be, was certainly not Lucius. I was out of my mind, staggered to the verge of madness, lost in a waking dream. I rubbed my eyes again and again to see if I was awake. At length I returned to some consciousness of the world around me, and seizing Fotis's hand, placed it against my eyes. 'I beseech you,' I said, 'while occasion still offers, as a supreme proof of your great love for me, give me, I entreat you, my honey, by all your charms, give me a little of that ointment. Bind your slave to you for ever by a boon he can never repay. Give me wings and I will play Cupid to your Venus.'

'What! you sly fox,' said she, 'do you want me to cut my own throat, my love? I can scarce preserve you from the she-wolves of Thessaly even now while

you lack your accoutrements. If you grow wings, where shall I ever find you, and when shall I ever see you again?'

'Do you think,' I replied, 'that even though I 23
soared through all heaven with eagle flight, as the sure messenger, the glad thunder-bearer of highest Jove, do you think my first thought would be other than to fly home at once to my sweet little nest and lay aside the glory of my wings? Heaven preserve me from such a crime! I swear by that sweet knot in which your hair is bound, wherewith you made my soul your captive, that I set my darling Fotis above all other women. Nay, once I have anointed myself and assumed the shape of such a bird, I must be careful, methinks, to keep well away from all habitations. What a pretty lover for the ladies of the town an owl would make! That would be cheerful! How they would like it! Why, when these night-birds get inside a house, we see them caught and nailed to the doors with care, that they may atone by their torments for the disaster with which their ill-omened flight has threatened the household. But there's one question I had almost forgotten to ask. By what word or deed shall I be able to strip off my feathers and become my own Lucius again?'

'You need not be alarmed as far as that is concerned,' she replied. 'For my mistress has shown me all the various charms whereby such shapes may be restored to human form. You need not suppose she did so out of any kindness to me. It was merely that

I might be able to aid her on her return and restore her to human shape. See then how small and trifling are the herbs that can produce such great results. You must bathe in spring-water with a little anise and laurel leaf mixed in it, and then take a draught from the mixture.'

24 She repeated this several times, and then creeping into the chamber with the utmost trepidation, removed the box from the casket. I embraced and kissed her first, and then praying her to bring me good luck in my airy flight, I cast off all my clothes, plunged my hands greedily into the box, and taking a good quantity of ointment I rubbed it all over my limbs. And now I began to poise my arms and wave them in the air, first one and then the other, after the manner of an owl. But no feathers or wings appeared anywhere, but my hair grew coarse and bristly, my soft skin hardened into hide, at my hands' tips were fingers five no more but all became fast bound in solitary hoofs, and a long tail began to grow from the extremity of my spine. My face grew huge, my mouth widened, my nostrils began to gape and my lips to droop; my ears also extended to an immoderate
25 length and were crowned with bristles. Lost and desperate, I surveyed my body over and perceived that I was not a bird but an ass. I would have protested against what Fotis had done, but I was deprived of human gesture and voice alike, and could only reproach her in silence by drooping my lower lip and casting sidelong glances from watery eyes, that yet had power to weep. When she saw what I was, she smote her face fiercely

with her hands and cried: 'Ah! I am lost! I am lost! In my terror and hurry I took the wrong box, deceived by its likeness to the other. Still all is well, for the remedy that shall bring you back to human shape is simpler than the other. You have only to nibble some roses and you will step forth from the ass's skin and be my own sweet Lucius once again. Would I had made us some rose-wreaths last evening as I have been wont to do. Then you had not suffered the delay even of a night. But I'll be stirring at early dawn and you shall have your remedy without delay.'

So she lamented, while I, although a perfect ass, 26
Lucius turned beast of burden, still kept my human understanding. I deliberated therefore long and earnestly with myself whether I should kill the worthless wicked wench by giving her a whole host of kicks and attacking her with my teeth. However, better thoughts recalled me from so desperate an enterprise. For if I killed Fotis, I should once more cut myself off from all chance of assistance and safety. So with drooping quivering head I swallowed the affront of the moment and went to the stable the submissive victim of my cruel misfortune, to join my good horse who had borne me so well. There I found another ass was stalled, the property of Milo my former host. I thought that if dumb animals had any secret sense of loyalty implanted in them, my horse would recognize me and be moved by something like pity to offer me hospitality and the best place in the stable. But oh! Jupiter, god of

hospitality! oh! Loyalty, goddess most holy![1] my noble charger and the ass put their heads together and without more ado conspired for my destruction. Afraid for the safety of their mangers, they scarcely saw me approaching the stall when they laid back their ears and pursued me with ferocious kicks. I was driven as far as possible from the barley which but last evening my
27 own hands had set before my beloved servant! After this treatment I retired to a corner of the stable condemned to exile and solitude. While I was considering the brutality of my colleagues and meditating how I should punish my faithless horse on the morrow when the rose-garden should have made me Lucius once again, I beheld on the very centre of the pillar which supported the beams of the stable roof an image of the goddess Epona within a small shrine. This image had been carefully decorated with rose-wreaths which were still fresh. I perceived the remedy that should save and succour me and in an ecstasy of hope I rose upon my hind legs, stretching my front legs as far as I could, and with neck extended and lips protruded to an inordinate extent I sought, with all the effort of which I was capable, to seize the wreaths. As ill-luck would have it, just as I was making the attempt, my own wretched slave, to whom I had always entrusted the care of my horse, suddenly caught sight of me, rose in indignation and said, 'How long are we to put up with this wretched jade? A moment ago he was attacking our beasts' manger and now he's

[1] *sacrata* (Brant).

assaulting the images of the gods. I'll lame the sacrilegious brute, I'll cripple him!' Forthwith he looked for a weapon, and stumbled on a bundle of firewood placed hard by. In this he searched and seizing the largest stick of all, a bludgeon with the leaves still on it, belaboured my unhappy self without ceasing, until suddenly there arose a huge noise and a wild battering at the doors; frightened cries of 'thieves, thieves', echoed from all the houses round and he fled in terror. The next moment, the house was broken open and the whole place invaded by 28
a band of robbers; every quarter of the house was beset by armed men, and when the neighbours rushed up to offer help, the enemy disposed their forces so as to bar their way. Every man of them was armed with torch and sword; they lit up the night; fire and steel flashed like the shafts of dawn. There was a storehouse heavily bolted and barred in the centre of the house, which was filled with Milo's treasures. They attacked it fiercely with axes, broke it open, carried forth the spoil through the breaches gaping on every side, and hurriedly making it up into parcels divided it among themselves. But the number of packets to be carried exceeded the number of bearers. Driven to extreme measures by the excessive abundance of their spoil they dragged my horse and us two asses out from the stable, loaded us, as far as was possible, with all the heavier bundles, and threatening us with sticks drove us forth from the house they had stripped bare. They left one of their

comrades behind to report what inquiry was made into the outrage, and with repeated blows urged us at top speed through the trackless mountains.

29 The weight of my enormous burden, the steepness of the lofty hills, and the length of the journey reduced me to such a state of exhaustion that I was as good as dead. At last it occurred to me, somewhat tardily it is true, but still quite seriously, to summon the aid of the laws that protect a Roman citizen and to free myself from all my woes by setting the awful name of the emperor between myself and my captors. When, therefore, it was high day and we were passing a large village crowded with folk who had come into market, I attempted in the very midst of the crowd to call upon the name of Caesar in the best of Greek. I succeeded in giving sufficiently loud and eloquent utterance to the word O! but the name of Caesar remained unuttered, being beyond my powers of articulation. The robbers treated my discordant cry with contempt, and beat me till they left my poor hide in such a state that it would have been useless even as a sieve. But at length great Jupiter held forth to me an unexpected chance of safety. While we were passing a number of small country houses and large cottages, I saw a very charming little garden, in which, among other pleasant plants, there bloomed roses unblemished in the morning dew. Gaping to devour them, and rendered nimble and cheerful by the hope of safety, I approached them. But just as I was going to seize them with my flapping lips, I bethought me of another and a wiser course.

I feared that, if I cast off my ass's skin and stepped forth as Lucius, I was safe to perish at the hands of the robbers; for they would either suspect me of being a wizard or fear that I should lay information against them. Wherefore I refrained from touching the roses; indeed, it was the only course possible, and acquiescing in my hard lot, I wore the semblance of an ass and munched hay.

BOOK IV

1 About mid-day, beneath a blazing sun, we halted at a village and put up at the houses of some old men who were well known to the robbers and on friendly terms with them. This much even an ass might perceive from their first meeting, the length of their conversation, and the warmth with which they embraced each other. For the robbers removed portions of my burden and presented them to their hosts, and seemed, by their whispering, to be telling them that they were stolen goods. We were now relieved of all our loads and turned into a neighbouring pasture to graze at will. But even though the ass and my horse were then feeding by my side, I could not bring myself to make my lunch off hay, a food which, until that day, had been wholly unknown to me. But seeing a small garden behind the inn, and being weak with hunger, I boldly invaded it and crammed my belly to repletion with vegetables, raw though they were. Then, after offering supplication to all the gods, I cast my eyes in every direction, if perchance I might discover some shining roseplot in the neighbouring gardens. For the very fact that I was alone lent me courage. I had nothing now to fear if, in this remote place, in the shelter of some orchard with no one to observe my transformation, I should find the remedy and rise from the cramped gait of a fourfooted beast to stand erect, a man once more.

Well, while I was thus tempest-tossed on the sea of 2
my thoughts, I perceived at a considerable distance a shady hollow filled by a leafy coppice, within which among diverse other plants and luxurious shrubs there shone the crimson hue of gleaming roses. I thought in my heart, which was not wholly the heart of an ass, that this was a grove sacred to Venus and the Graces, within whose secret shades glowed the royal sheen of the flower of merriment. I called good Fortune, goddess of joy, to my aid and hurried forward with eager step, and at such a pace that I felt as though I were an ass no more, but had been transformed by my amazing speed into a chariot horse. Alas! Nimble and astonishing as my efforts were, they failed to outstrip the perversity of my fortune. For when I approached the place I saw no sweet soft roses, dripping with nectar and heavenly dew, no roses such as spring on happy thorn and blessed briar; nay, even the hollow itself had vanished. It was but a river-bank lined with thick trees. These trees have long leaves like those of the laurel and bear blossoms of a pale crimson, which they proffer as though for all the world they were sweet-scented flowers. But their scent is in truth of the smallest, and the unlettered herd call them in rustic parlance rose-laurels, while any beast that tastes of them dies.

Seeing how fate had ensnared me I bade good-bye 3
to all thought of safety, and was filled with desire to partake of the poison of those false roses. But even as I approached hesitatingly to pluck them, a youth ran

up—I think he must have been the gardener of whose vegetables I had made such devastation; on perceiving what havoc I had wrought he rushed up, wild with rage, a large cudgel in his hands. He caught me and thrashed me from head to tail, so that I had been like to die beneath his blows, had I not used my wits and saved myself. For I heaved up my hind-quarters and dealt him such a series of kicks from my hinder hoofs, that he fell to the ground and lay there grievously wounded. Having thus freed myself from him I made off in flight up the mountain-side. But straightway a woman, presumably his wife, caught sight of him from the heights above as he lay prostrate and unconscious, uttered a shrill scream of woe, and rushed to his side; such was the pity wakened by her grief, that I was brought into the very jaws of death. For her lamentations aroused all the villagers. They called together their dogs, excited them to fury, and urged them on from this side and from that to rush upon me and tear me in pieces. When I saw the number and size of these dogs, which were fit to fight lions or bears, and perceived how fierce they were against me for whose destruction they had been called together, I felt that without doubt I was but a hand's-breadth this side of death; however, my very peril inspired me with counsel; I ceased to run away and returned at top speed back to the inn where we had put up.

4 The sun had now started on his downward course and the robbers led us forth from the inn and loaded us, putting by far the heaviest burden upon me. After

we had completed a good part of our journey, I began to feel quite worn out by the distance I had covered. Bowed down beneath the weight of my burden, and weary with the cudgellings I had received, while my hoofs were so cut about that I limped and stumbled, I stopped close to a rivulet whose waters flowed softly by, and considering the opportunity admirable for the exercise of my ingenuity, deliberated letting my legs go neatly from under me and throwing myself down. This once done, I was obstinately resolved that all the blows in the world should not make me rise and proceed on my journey. I was resolved, in fact, to perish beneath the blows of their cudgels, nay, if need be, of their swords. For I thought that I was so weak and breathless, that I deserved to be dismissed on grounds of health, and conceived that the robbers, in their impatience of delay and their desire to continue their rapid flight, would assuredly remove the burden from my back, distribute it among the two other beasts, and leave me as a prey to the wolves and vultures without inflicting any more serious punishment. Excellent as my design was, it was anticipated by the cruelty of fortune. 5 For the other ass divined and forestalled my purpose, and feigning weariness, cast himself down, pack and all, without more ado. He lay there like dead, paying no attention to cudgel or goad. They pulled his tail, his ears, his legs this way and that, but he made no attempt to rise, until at last the robbers, wearied by their efforts, gave up all hope of him. They conversed for a while among themselves, and then, that they might no

longer delay their flight by their attentions to a dead ass, nay, an ass of stone, they distributed his burden between myself and the horse, drew a sword, hamstringed him in all four legs and, dragging him a little to one side of the road, cast him still alive over a lofty precipice into the neighbouring valley. In view of the fate of my wretched comrade-in-arms, I resolved to lay aside all thought of fraud or guile and to show my masters what a useful ass I was. For I had heard them saying to one another that our halting-place, where rest should await us at the conclusion of our journey, was quite near, even the place where they dwelt and had their habitation. So after crossing a gentle slope we came to our goal. They unloaded all their belongings and stored them within doors. Feeling myself free from my burden, I refreshed myself, in lieu of taking a bath, by rolling in the dust.

6 Time and place demand that I should describe the country where the robbers lived and the cave which was their dwelling. I will put my powers to the proof and leave my readers no ground for suspecting that my senses and understanding, no less than my body, were those of an ass. I would have you imagine a wild mountain of unusual height and dark with the leafage of an umbrageous forest. All along its steep slopes, at a point where it was engirdled by jagged and inaccessible precipices, there was a series of deep and hollow ravines, blocked by vast growths of bramble. Wherever one cast one's eye, they struck deep into the mountain side and formed natural fastnesses. From

the summit streamed a torrent with vast bubbles of foam. As it fell over the steeps, it shot forth a cascade of silver waters and then, splitting into several rivulets, distributed its waters through the various gorges into stagnant pools which girt the whole place about as it were with a landlocked sea or a sluggish river. At the base of the mountain's edge lay the cavern's mouth, and over it a lofty tower had been erected; extending on either side were enclosures strongly built of massive hurdles, and suitable for use as sheepfolds; the door was approached by a long and narrow path enclosed between walls. I would wager anything you would have called it a robbers' den at first sight. The only thing near was a small hut rudely built of reeds in which the robbers posted their night-watchmen, who as I afterwards learned were chosen by lot.

Making themselves small, the robbers crept up to the 7
cave in single file. They first tied us up with a stout thong in front of the door itself, and then uncivilly enough hailed an ancient woman bowed with extreme old age, who appeared to be the sole person charged to look after the safety and welfare of these young men. 'What, you horrid old carrion, you whose life is the last insult to the living and the thought of whose death turns Pluto's stomach, are you going to sit idle at home and amuse yourself? Here are we returned after a hard day's work and mighty dangerous too. Aren't you going to give us some comfort in the way of refreshment, seeing how late it is? You do nothing night and day but souse your incorrigible belly with wine, you old glutton!'

To this the old woman timidly replied in a tremulous squeaky voice, 'Nay, my brave and faithful young masters, everything is ready for you, abundance of dishes, all cooked to a nicety with the sweetest flavouring, plenty of bread, floods of wine in well-rinsed cups, and a hot bath in which you can bathe pell-mell after your wont.' The moment she finished speaking they stripped themselves, and after they had warmed their naked bodies before a great fire, they soused themselves with hot water, anointed themselves with oil, and lay
8 down to tables piled with abundance of viands. They had scarcely done so when, behold! a second and much larger band of young men entered, whom you would have guessed without a moment's hesitation to be as thorough-paced robbers as the first. For they carried their booty with them, coins and vessels of gold and silver, silken stuffs and cloth inwoven with threads of gold. They refreshed themselves with a similar bath and took their places on the couches beside their comrades. Lots were then drawn as to who should wait at table. They ate and drank confusedly, gorging heaps of meat and mountains of bread, while the name of their cups was legion. They became hilariously noisy, bellowed songs, and bandied insults to and fro by way of jest, and their general conduct reminded one of the banquet of drunken Lapiths and Centaurs, half beast, half man.[1] Then one of them who surpassed all the rest in strength said, 'We've done a gallant deed, we've stormed Milo's house at Hypata. And not only

[1] I have transferred *semiferis* to follow *Centauris*.

have we made a rich haul, thanks to our valour, but we've returned to camp without losing a single man, and have got home with eight feet more than we had when we went out, if that counts for anything. But you who visited the cities of Boeotia have brought back but a diminished company and have lost your gallant leader Lamachus. I would sooner have seen him safe and sound—and rightly too—than all those bundles you have brought us. But his too headstrong valour has brought him to his death, and our hero's memory shall live among the names of famous kings and leaders of wars. You are frugal robbers. You go creeping about and prying timidly into baths and old women's chambers, and your thefts are petty and only worthy of slaves.'

To this one of the second gang retorted: 'Are 9
you the only man in the world who doesn't know that the bigger the house the easier it is to storm? The household may be numerous and the dwelling ample, but every man has greater thought for his own skin than for his master's wealth. Thrifty and solitary men, on the contrary, be their fortune large or small, keep it cunningly concealed, guard it more keenly, and are ready to shed their blood in its defence. The facts will prove the truth of what I say. We had scarcely reached Thebes of the seven gates when we set about the first duty enjoined by the robber's art, and made zealous inquiry as to which of the citizens might be the possessors of fortunes. We discovered that a certain money-changer named Chryseros had large quantities of money in his possession, though he was at great

pains to conceal his wealth for fear he might be called upon to spend it in the service of the state or to provide public games. He lived in complete solitude, content with a small but well-fortified house. His clothing was all in rags and his body filthy; but he slept on bags of gold. We resolved therefore to approach him first: we thought nothing of a fight with a single man! We could take all his gold at our leisure without the least trouble. We lost no time, but at nightfall we arrived at his doors. We decided not to lift them from their hinges or prise them open, or even break them down, for fear the noise made by the broken panels should rouse all the neighbourhood and involve us in disaster. Lamachus therefore, our heroic standard-bearer, in all the confidence of his tried valour, gradually thrust his hand through the orifice made for the insertion of the key and sought to draw back the bars. But Chryseros, that vilest of all two-footed things, had long been on the watch, taking note of everything. With noiseless footfall and obstinate silence he crept slowly up and with a sudden violent blow drove a huge nail through our leader's hand and pinned him to the door. Then leaving him thus fatally ensnared, as it were nailed to a cross, he ascended the roof of his hovel, and shouting with all the strength of his lungs, summoned the neighbours to his aid. Calling each man by his name, and appealing to them in the cause of the common safety, he spread abroad the report that his house had suddenly caught fire. At this all the neighbours, terrified by their proximity to the danger

rushed to his assistance in a panic of anxiety. We 11
were caught between two disastrous alternatives. We must perish ourselves, or desert our comrade. We therefore, with his consent, determined on a violent remedy suggested by our extremity. Striking through the joint where the arm joins the shoulder, we lopped away our leader's limb, left the arm where it was, and staunching the wound with a number of cloths for fear the blood might betray our course, we hurriedly retraced our footsteps, carrying with us all that was left of Lamachus. Our devotion to him heightened our fears, the noise of the tumult behind us quickened our steps, the terror of our imminent danger drove us in panic-stricken flight. But our hero, for all his high spirit and transcendent courage, could neither follow us in our haste nor be left where he was. He implored us with prayers and entreaties, he adjured us by the right hand of Mars, by the common oath that bound us, to free our comrade-in-arms from his agony and from capture by the foe. "What motive is there," he asked, "for a brave robber to survive the loss of that hand, which alone can seize or slay? I shall be happy if I fall in self-chosen death by a comrade's hand." When he could persuade none of us for all his urging to slay him in cold blood, he seized the sword in the hand that was left him, kissed the blade again and again and drove it unflinching into the middle of his breast. Then we, reverencing the courage of our great-hearted leader, wrapped his lifeless body with all care in a linen garment and committed it to the concealment of the

sea. And there lies our Lamachus, with a whole element for his grave.

12 Thus died he, and his end was worthy of his valour. But Alcimus also, despite the caution with which he laid his plans, failed to win from Fortune the approval that his skill deserved.[1] He had broken into a cottage; the owner, an old woman, was asleep, and he had ascended to the upper chamber. He should first have gripped her by the throat and strangled her, but he preferred to begin by throwing out the various portions of the booty through a large window for us to bear away. He had carried out his whole scheme with success, but since he could not bring himself to forgo the bedclothes in which the old hag was sleeping, he threw her from the bed, snatched away the coverlet and was going to throw it out of the window, as he had done with the rest of her possessions. But the wicked old woman caught him by the knees and entreated him, saying, "Why, my son, do you present all the miserable rags and chattels of an unhappy old woman to her rich neighbours, whose house that window overlooks." Alcimus was deceived by the cunning of this wily speech and, believing that what he heard was true, feared that all that he had already thrown down had fallen not into the hands of his comrades but into a stranger's house, and that if he threw out anything further it would meet the same fate. He was convinced of his mistake and, not wishing to repeat it, leaned out of the window to

[1] *consonum* (Helm).

take a careful survey of everything, and above all to estimate the wealth of the adjoining house of which she had spoken. While he was off his guard, and making strenuous efforts to get a good view, that aged sinner gave him a push which, though feeble, was sudden and unexpected; and as he hung balanced there and absorbed in spying out what he might see, she succeeded in casting him headlong down. The height from which he fell was considerable, and he chanced moreover to fall on a large stone which lay hard by, with the result that he broke and shattered the framework of his ribs. Streams of blood spurted from his mouth, he told us what had happened, and gave up the ghost. He did not suffer long. Him too we buried as we had buried our other comrade, and gave our Lamachus a trusty squire.

13 Overwhelmed by this double bereavement, we abandoned our Theban enterprise and went on to the neighbouring town of Plataea. There we found every one talking about a certain Democharès who was going to give an exhibition of gladiators. He was a man of the highest birth, the greatest wealth, and the utmost generosity, and his arrangements for the public entertainment were of a magnificence worthy of his fortune. What wit or eloquence could find words adequate to describe the elaborate splendour of the show in all its details? There were gladiators renowned for their skill, hunters famed for their swiftness, and criminals guilty past all reprieve who were to provide a feast for the maws of wild beasts. There was also

an ingenious contrivance erected on a framework of beams, consisting of towers built of wood and resembling a house on wheels: it was decorated with painting, and provided an ornamental cage for the beasts that were to be hunted. And what a number of beasts there were, and what variety! Democharès had been at great pains to procure these noble sepulchres for the condemned felons, importing them even from foreign lands. But gorgeous as was the equipment of the show in these respects, the chief feature was the large number of huge bears which he had used all the resources of his wealth to secure. Some he had captured in the chase near home, others he had bought regardless of expense, but many had been presented by his friends, who vied with one another in their efforts to procure them. All these beasts he kept with the utmost care and was at great expense for their maintenance.

14 But alas! this magnificent and gorgeous provision for the public entertainment did not escape the cruel eyes of Envy. For the bears, wearied by their long captivity, enfeebled by the heats of summer, and weakened by their lack of exercise, fell victims to a sudden pestilence and were almost entirely exterminated. In every open space through all the town you might see these monsters lying like wrecks, in the agonies of death. At this the common folk, whose untutored poverty makes them far from dainty in their choice of food and drives them to seek out the most revolting things for their famished bellies, provided they can get them free of cost, hastened to partake of

the banquets that were spread for them through all the town.

These circumstances suggested a most ingenious plan to myself and friend Babulus. We carried one of these bears which surpassed the others in bulk to our dwelling-place, as though to eat it. We stripped the hide entirely from the flesh, being careful to preserve all the claws. The head of the beast down to where it joined the neck we left entire, the skin of the body we reduced by careful scraping, and after sprinkling it with powdered ashes hung it up in the sun to dry. While it was being cured by the warmth of the fires of heaven, we meanwhile enjoyed a generous diet on its flesh and devised the following plan of campaign in which we swore to do or die. Some one of our number who surpassed the rest in courage even more than in bodily strength, above all one who would undertake the enterprise of his own free will, was to hide himself in the skin and assume the appearance of a bear. He was to be introduced into the house of Democharès and, availing himself of the silence of the night, to open the doors and give us easy entrance. Not a few of our brave band were attracted by the 15
ingenuity of the plan and volunteered for the task. Of these Thrasyleon was selected by the vote of the company in preference to the rest, and undertook the risks involved in assuming so dangerous a disguise. The hide was now soft and tractable and easy to manipulate, and he entered it cheerfully. We then stitched the edges together with fine cord, hiding the seam,

small though it was, with the fur which grew thick around. With some difficulty we got Thrasyleon's head to go into the cavity of the mouth through the aperture left by the removal of the throat. We pierced small holes in the nostrils and eyes, that he might not be suffocated, and then placed our brave comrade, now a perfect beast, in a cage which we had bought cheap. He entered it unassisted, showing the greatest energy and agility. Our preliminaries completed, we proceeded to carry out the rest of our scheme.

16 Having discovered that Democharès had an intimate friend named Nicanor, of Thracian extraction, we forged a letter in his name, in which, like a true friend, he purported to dedicate the firstfruits of his hunting to the enhancement of Democharès' entertainment. When the evening was well advanced we proceeded under cover of darkness to offer Democharès the forged letter and the cage containing Thrasyleon. He was amazed at the size of the beast and delighted at the appropriateness of his friend's generosity, and, being a generous fellow, ordered ten pieces of gold to be given us from his purse for having brought him such joy. Soon, since men, on hearing of a novelty, always hasten without more ado to glut their eyes with the sight of it, a large crowd gathered to marvel at the beast. Thrasyleon prevented them from too nice or curious inspection by continually threatening to attack them. The whole town with one voice congratulated Democharès on his great good fortune; for in spite of the number of beasts he had lost, he had succeeded,

thanks to this new arrival, in defeating to some extent the malignity of Fortune. Democharès then gave orders that the new beast was to be carried with the greatest care to his paddock. I, however, interposed. "Take 17
care, sir," I said; "the beast is worn out by the heat of the sun and the length of its journey. It would be unwise to put it with a number of other beasts, especially since, as I am told, their health is far from good. See how spacious and airy your house is; moreover, it has a sheet of water close by to keep it cool! Are you not aware that this species of beast always makes its lair among groves of trees, in dewy caves, or beside some pleasant stream?"

Democharès was alarmed by my warning and, counting over in his mind the number of beasts he had lost, gave ready assent and permitted us to place the cage where we chose. "We ourselves," I added, "are prepared to stay and watch by the cage during the night to ensure that every care is shown in giving the beast suitable food and the drink to which it is accustomed: for it is tired out by the hot weather and the discomforts to which it has been subjected."

"We have no need of your services," he replied. "By now almost my entire household has had such long experience of feeding bears that it requires no assistance."

We therefore took our leave and departed. After 18
we had passed the city gate we observed a tomb situated in a lonely place at a distance from the road. The lids of the coffins it contained had almost disappeared through the long decay of years, and the dead

men who dwelt therein had fallen into dust and ashes. We therefore opened them indiscriminately that they might serve as receptacles for our expected plunder.

Then after the rule of our order we waited for that dark hour of night ere the moon is risen, when sleep's first onset most surely invades and holds the hearts of mortals, and halted our company, all armed with swords, before the very doors of Democharès' house as an earnest of our purpose to pillage the house. Thrasyleon was equally punctual. At the very moment most favourable for a robber's enterprise he crept from the cage, drew his sword, and killed all his keepers to the last man, as they slept hard by. Finally, he slew the porter also, and seizing the key opened the front door. We promptly rushed in all together. When we were all of us in the heart of the house he showed us the strongroom where, with the eyes of a keen observer, he had seen them on the previous evening put by a quantity of silver plate. By our united efforts we broke it open. I bade my comrades-in-arms carry off as much gold or silver as each could carry and hide it with all speed in the house of the dead, who would tell no tales. That done, they were to hurry back and take a fresh load of plunder. I would remain in front of the threshold and keep careful watch over our common interest till they returned. For I thought that the sight of the bear as it roamed about the interior of the house would be sufficient to frighten away any of the household who might chance to be awake. For who, however brave and fearless he might be, when he saw so huge a monster, at night too of

all times, would not fly hastily to his chamber, draw fast the bolts and sit quaking with fear behind his door? My plans had been laid with the utmost precaution for our 19
safety, but a most unfortunate thing happened. While I was anxiously awaiting the return of my comrades, a young slave, whom some god[1] had caused to be wakened by the noise, crept softly out and seeing the beast, which was ranging the whole house at will, uttered not a sound, but retraced his steps and told all the household what he had seen. Forthwith the servants, who were many, filled the whole house with their multitude; torches, lanterns, tapers, candles, and every kind of artificial light illumined the darkness. Great as was the crowd, there was not a man came without some weapon; armed with bludgeon, spear, or even with drawn swords, they guarded every entrance. Nay more, they set on great long-eared shaggy hounds to subdue the beast. As the tumult continued gradually to increase, I set off to make good my retreat from the house, but 20
as I hid behind the door I could see Thrasyleon beating off the dogs in the most wonderful way. For although he stood on life's utmost verge, he forgot neither himself, nor us, nor his former valour, and wrestled with the jaws of Cerberus that gaped for him. While life was still in him he continued to support the rôle which he had voluntarily assumed. Now he fled, now he held his ground, varying both attitude and motion, till at length he escaped from the house. But although he had reached the freedom of the public street, he was

[1] Omitting *vel*.

unable to seek safety in flight. For all the dogs of the neighbouring alley—and they were as fierce as they were numerous—joined forces with the hounds which had also just issued from the house in hot pursuit. It was a wretched and dismal sight my eyes beheld. There was our good Thrasyleon surrounded and besieged by crowds of furious dogs and torn by countless wounds. At length I could endure his agony no longer and joined the crowd of folk who thronged about him and attempted to help my good comrade-in-arms by stealth, for it was all I could do. So I exhorted the leaders of the hunt as follows: "Shame on you! It's a monstrous crime that we should destroy so large and valuable a beast."

21 But my device was of no avail, and my words failed to save the unhappy young man. For a tall and sturdy fellow rushed from the house and without a moment's delay drove a spear into the bear's inmost vitals, whereupon others in increasing numbers threw fear to the winds and hacked him at close quarters with their swords. But even at the last, when that spirit, for which immortality were a worthy crown, was vanquished quite, his fortitude was unconquered, and Thrasyleon, the pride and glory of our band, uttered neither cry nor scream that might betray his oath. Mangled by the hounds' teeth and maimed by the steel as he was, he roared and bellowed continually with the voice of a wild beast, he endured his sufferings with noble constancy, and though he yielded up his life to fate, he made fame his own for ever.

Such was the terror, such was the fear and con-

fusion with which he had filled the crowd, that it was not till dawn, nay, not till high day, that any one dared to touch the beast with as much as his finger for all that it lay dead. At length, a butcher a little more daring than the rest, shrinkingly and fearfully cut open the beast's belly and stripped the noble robber of his skin. Thus died Thrasyleon; he is lost to us, but he is Glory's for ever! We hurriedly packed up the parcels which the faithful dead had kept for us, and left Plataean territory in high haste. As we went, the thought again and again recurred to our minds, that if good faith is nowhere to be found in this mortal life, it is no marvel. She has fled to the spirits of the dead and to the world below, in hatred of man's treachery. And so here we are, worn out by the weight of our burdens and the severity of the journey. We have lost three of our comrades and have brought hither the booty which you see before you.'

So closed his tale, and they all poured libations of 22
pure wine from cups of gold in memory of their dead comrades-in-arms. Then, after singing a hymn or two in honour of Mars, they slept awhile.

The old woman had given us abundance of fresh barley without stint or measure. Indeed, my horse, who found himself sole master of such a rich store, might well have thought he was having a banquet worthy of the leaping priests of Mars. For my part, as I have always disliked barley save when ground to flour and softened by a thorough cooking, I searched out a corner where the loaves left over by this vast

gathering had been piled together. My jaws were weak with long fasting and might well have been full of cobwebs. Still, I plied them lustily. When night was well advanced, the robbers awoke, struck camp and, variously equipped, some armed with swords, others disguised as goblins, went hurriedly forth. Not even the imminence of sleep could stop my jaws, which champed with dogged persistence. And though formerly, when I was Lucius, I would leave the table contentedly after eating one or two small loaves, I now had such a cavernous belly to serve that I had almost reached the third basket, and day caught me still intent
23 on my work. At length such sense of shame as an ass may feel induced me to stop; but it was only with the utmost reluctance that I left my food to quench my thirst in a rivulet hard by. Shortly afterwards the robbers returned, looking preternaturally anxious and moody; they carried no bundles, nay, not so much as the meanest cloak. The united swords, violence, and strength of the whole band had only succeeded in capturing one poor maiden, whom they now brought into the cave. She had noble features and her fine raiment proclaimed her to be sprung from the best blood in that part of Greece. She was in fact a girl such as might have made even an ass fall in love; but she was full of sorrow and kept rending her clothes and her hair. As soon as they had led her into the cave, they strove to assuage her grief, and thus addressed her: 'You need have no fear for your safety or your honour. Just show a little patience, so that we may

make some profit out of this affair. It is the hard necessity of poverty alone that has made us take to this trade. Your parents, however avaricious they may be, will readily furnish a suitable ransom for their own child out of the vast piles of wealth they own.'

These vain words and the like they kept repeating 24
incessantly, but failed utterly to soothe the maiden's grief. On the contrary, she wept unrestrainedly, her head bowed between her knees. The robbers then summoned the old woman to the cave and bade her sit down beside the girl and console her, as best she might with gentle words. They then betook themselves to the usual employments of their calling.

But all the words of the old woman were of no avail to make the girl cease from the tears in which she was drowned. Her wailing became shriller still, her sides were shaken by repeated sobs till even I wept! 'Alack!' she cried, 'what grief is mine! Such a home, such a household, such devoted slaves, such pious parents were mine, and now I have lost all! I have been kidnapped by robbers, and am become a bondwoman. Ah! cruel fate! Here I am immured like any slave in this rocky prison; deprived of all the luxuries midst which I was born and bred. I know not whether they will spare my life. How can I cease to weep, or how endure to live in this house of blood and slaughter amid such a gang of brutal robbers, such an army of assassins!'

Thus did she make her lament, till her voice grew hoarse and weary, and exhausted by her soul's grief and body's weariness she let fall her drooping eyes in

25 slumber. But scarce had she closed them when she leapt from sleep like a madwoman, and tore herself with a yet fiercer agony of grief. She began to beat her bosom with frenzied hands and to batter her fair face. The old woman besought her earnestly to reveal what had caused this fresh outburst of grief. In answer she drew a deep sigh and began as follows. 'Oh! there's no hope *now*; it's all over with me; I have no more hope of safety. A halter or a sword or a precipice for me! There's no other way!'

This angered the old woman somewhat, and a scowl came upon her face. 'Tell me, you baggage,' she said, 'what are you crying about? why, when you had gone off quietly to sleep, do you begin lamenting again in this unreasonable way? Do you want to deprive my young men of the profit they will get from your ransom? If you go on like that, I'll have you burnt alive. Nobody will take any heed of your tears. That sort of thing doesn't appeal to robbers!'

26 The girl was frightened by these words and kissed her hands. 'Forgive me, mother,' she said, 'but at least have a little pity! Remember you are a woman, and help me, if only a little, to endure my cruel misfortune. Old as are your years and long as you have lived, when I look at your reverend gray hair, I cannot think that the fount of pity is wholly dried up within you. Let me put before you the scene of my disaster. I was betrothed to a handsome youth, the first among his peers, whom every man among our citizens regarded as his adopted son. He was, moreover, my cousin, but

three years my elder. He had been brought up with me from my earliest years, grown up with me in the same dear house, nay, as infants we shared the same room, the same bed. Deep and mutual affection united us and pledged him to be mine. Long since he had been destined for my husband and plighted to me. Nay, with my parents' consent, the contract of marriage, naming him my husband, had been drawn up; crowds of kinsfolk and relations had gathered for the ceremony and attended him as he sacrificed victims in the public shrines and temples. The whole house was decorated with laurels, shone with torches, and echoed with the marriage hymn. My unhappy mother arrayed me fairly in the raiment of a bride as I lay upon her bosom. She rained kisses sweet as honey upon me, and prayed anxiously that I might some day have children at my knee, when suddenly a band of cut-throats burst into the house, fierce as though bent on battle and brandishing their naked swords as if to slay. But neither slaughter nor plunder was their aim. Instead, they invaded my room in a dense and serried band. None of our servants showed fight or offered even the least resistance, and I was torn, distraught with grief, trembling, half-dead with cruel terror, even from my mother's arms. Thus was my bridal annulled and rudely set at naught, even as were the bridals of Attis or Protesilaus. And now behold my sorrows 27
are renewed by a cruel dream, and the crown is set upon my woes. For methought I was torn with violence from my home, from my bridal chamber, nay,

even from the bridal bed, and borne through trackless wildernesses calling on the name of my unhappy husband, while he, widowed of my embraces, followed after me as I was borne away by others' feet. Unguents still streamed from him and a wreath of flowers was still about his brow; with wild cries he bewailed the loss of his fair bride and called all the folk to aid him. But one of the robbers, furious at his importunate pursuit, caught up a large stone that lay before his feet and with it smote and slew the unhappy youth my husband. Such was the cruel vision that dismayed me and woke me up in terror from my hateful sleep.'

The tale of her sorrows wrung a sigh from the old crone. 'Be of good cheer, mistress,' she replied, 'and don't be frightened by the false lying dreams. Visions seen during the day are ever counted false, and even the phantoms of the night sometimes go by contraries. For sometimes to weep, to be beaten, or even to be slain in dreams foretells profit and prosperity; while to laugh and feed on honeyed dainties, or to be caught in the delights of love will signify that you shall be torn by grief of mind, sickness of body, and other like misfortunes. Come, I'll tell you a pretty story and beguile you from your sorrows by an old wife's tale.' She then began:—

28 'In a certain city there once lived a king and queen. They had three daughters very fair to view. But whereas it was thought that the charms of the two eldest, great as they were, could yet be worthily celebrated by mortal praise, the youngest daughter was so strangely

and wonderfully fair that human speech was all too poor to describe her beauty, or even to tell of its praise. Nay, many of the citizens and multitudes of strangers were drawn to the town in eager crowds by the fame of so marvellous a sight and were struck dumb at the sight of such unapproachable loveliness, so that raising their right hands to their lips, with thumb erect and the first finger laid to its base, they worshipped her with prayers of adoration as though she were the goddess Venus herself. And now the fame had gone abroad through all the neighbouring towns and all the country round about, that the goddess, who sprang from the blue deep of the sea and was born from the spray of the foaming waves, had deigned to manifest her godhead to all the world and was dwelling among earthly folk ; or, if that was not so, it was certain, they said, that heaven had rained fresh procreative dew, and earth, not sea, had brought forth as a flower a second Venus in all the glory of her maidenhood.

This belief increased each day, until it knew no bounds. 29
The fame thereof had already spread abroad to the nearest islands, and had traversed many a province and a great portion of the earth. And now many a mortal journeyed from far and sailed o'er the great deeps of ocean, flocking to see the wonder and glory of the age. Now no man sailed to Paphos or Cnidos, or even to Cythera, that they might behold the goddess Venus; her rites were put aside, her temples fell to ruin, her sacred couches were disregarded, her ceremonies neglected, her images uncrowned, her altars desolate and foul

with fireless ashes. It was to a girl men prayed, and it was in the worship of mortal beauty that they sought to appease the power of the great goddess. When the maid went forth at morning, men propitiated the name of Venus with feast and sacrifice, though Venus was not there; and as the maid moved through the streets, multitudes prayed to her and offered flowers woven in garlands or scattered loose at will.

But the true Venus was exceedingly wroth that divine honours should be transferred thus extravagantly to the worship of a mortal maid. She could bear her fury no longer, her head shook and a deep groan burst from her lips, and thus she spake with herself: "Behold, I the first parent of created things, the primal source of all the elements; behold, I Venus, the kindly mother of all the world, must share my majesty and honour with a mortal maid, and my name that dwelleth in the heavens is profaned with stains of earth! Shall I endure the doubt cast by this vicarious adoration, this worship of my godhead that is shared with her? Shall a girl that is doomed to die, parade in my likeness? It was in vain the shepherd, on whose impartial justice Jove set the seal of his approval, preferred me over such mighty goddesses for my surpassing beauty. Nay, but this girl, whoe'er she be, that hath usurped my honours shall have no joy thereof. I will make her repent of her beauty, even her unlawful loveliness."

Straightway she summoned her winged headstrong boy, that wicked boy, scorner of law and order, who, armed with arrows and torch aflame, speeds through others'

homes by night, saps the ties of wedlock, and all unpunished commits hideous crime and uses all his power for ill. Him then, though wantonness and lust are his by birth, she fired still further by her words, and leading him to that city showed him Psyche—for so the maid was called—face to face. Then, groaning 31
at the far-flown renown of her fair rival, her utterance broken with indignation, she cried, "I implore thee by all the bonds of love that bind thee to her that bore thee, by the sweet wounds thine arrows deal and by the honeyed smart of thy fires, avenge thy mother, aye, avenge her to the full and sternly punish yonder rebellious beauty. But this, this only, this beyond all else I would have thee do and do it with a will. Cause yonder maid to be consumed with passion for the vilest of men, for one whom Fortune hath condemned to have neither health nor wealth nor honour, one so broken that through all the world his misery hath no peer."

So spake she, and with parted lips kissed her son long and fervently. Then she returned to the shore hard by, where the sea ebbs and flows, and treading with rosy feet the topmost foam of the quivering waves, plunged down to the deep's dry floor. The sea-gods tarried not to do her service. It was as though she had long since commanded their presence, though in truth she had but just formed the wish. The daughters of Nereus came singing in harmony, Portunus came with bristling beard of azure, Salacia with fish-teeming womb, and the babe Palaemon, driver of the dolphin car. Now far and wide hosts of Tritons came plunging

through the seas; one blew a soft blast from his echoing shell, another with a silken awning shaded her head from the fierce heat of the sun, a third held up a mirror before his mistress's eyes, while others swam yoked beneath her car. Such was the host that escorted Venus, as she went on her way to the halls of ocean.

32 Meanwhile Psyche, for all her manifest beauty, had no joy of her loveliness. All men gazed upon her, yet never a king nor prince nor even a lover from the common folk came forward desirous to claim her hand in marriage. Men marvelled at her divine loveliness, but as men marvel at a statue fairly wrought. Long since her elder sisters, whose beauty was but ordinary and had ne'er been praised through all the world, had been betrothed to kings that came to woo, and had become happy brides. But Psyche sat at home an unwedded maid, and sick of body and broken in spirit bewailed her loneliness and solitude, loathing in her heart the loveliness that had charmed so many nations. Wherefore the father of the hapless girl was seized with great grief; suspecting the anger of heaven and fearing the wrath of the gods, he inquired of the most ancient oracle of the Milesian god, and with prayer and burnt-offering besought the mighty deity to send a husband to wed the maid whom none had wooed.

Apollo, though an Ionian and a Greek, in order not to embarrass the author of this Milesian tale, delivered his oracle in Latin as follows:—

On some high crag, O king, set forth the maid, 33
In all the pomp of funeral robes arrayed.
Hope for no bridegroom born of mortal seed,
But fierce and wild and of the dragon breed.
He swoops all-conquering, borne on airy wing,
With fire and sword he makes his harvesting;
Trembles before him Jove, whom gods do dread,
And quakes the darksome river of the dead.

The king, once so happy, on hearing the pronouncement of the sacred oracle, returned home in sorrow and distress, and set forth to his wife the things ordained in that ill-starred oracle. They mourned and wept and lamented for many days. But at last the time drew near for the loathly performance of that cruel ordinance. The unhappy maid was arrayed for her ghastly bridal, the torches' flame burned low, clogged with dark soot and ash, the strains of the flute of wedlock were changed to the melancholy Lydian mode, the glad chant of the hymeneal hymn ended in mournful wailing, and the girl on the eve of marriage wiped away her tears even with her bridal veil. The whole city also joined in weeping the sad fate of the stricken house, and the public grief found expression in an edict suspending all business.

But the commands of heaven must be obeyed and 34
the unhappy Psyche must go to meet her doom. And so when all the rites of this ghastly bridal had been performed amid deepest grief, the funeral train of the living dead was led forth escorted by all the people. It was not her marriage procession that Psyche followed

dissolved in tears, but her own obsequies. Bowed in grief and overwhelmed by their sore calamity, her parents still shrank to perform the hateful deed of ill. But their daughter herself addressed them thus:—

"Why torment ye your hapless age with this long weeping? Why with ceaseless wailing weary the life within you, life more near and dear to me than to yourselves? Why with vain tears deform those features that I so revere? Why lacerate your eyes? Your eyes are mine! Why beat your bosoms and the breasts that suckled me? Lo! what rich recompense ye have for my glorious beauty.[1] Too late ye perceive that the mortal blow that strikes you down is dealt by wicked Envy. When nations and peoples gave me divine honour, when with one voice they hailed me as a new Venus, then was the time for you to grieve, to weep and mourn me as one dead. Now I perceive, now my eyes are opened. It is the name of Venus and that alone which has brought me to my death. Lead me on and set me on the crag that fate has appointed. I hasten to meet that blest union, I hasten to behold the noble husband that awaits me. Why do I put off and shun his coming? Was he not born to destroy all the world?"

So spake the maid and then was silent, and with step unwavering mingled in the crowd of folk that followed to do her honour. They climbed a lofty mountain and came to the appointed crag. There they placed the maiden on the topmost peak and all departed from her. The marriage torches, with which they had

[1] Omitting mark of interrogation.

lit the way before her, were all extinguished by their tears. They left them and with downcast heads prepared to return home. As for her hapless parents, crushed by the weight of their calamity, they shut themselves up within their house of gloom and gave themselves over to perpetual night. Psyche meanwhile sat trembling and afraid upon the very summit of the crag and wept, when, suddenly, a soft air from the breathing West made her raiment wave and blew out the tunic from her bosom, then gradually raised her and bearing her slowly on its quiet breath down the slopes of that high cliff, let her fall gently down and laid her on the flowery sward in the bosom of a deep vale.

BOOK V

1 PSYCHE lay sweetly reclined in that soft grassy place on a couch of herbage fresh with dew. Her wild anguish of spirit was assuaged and she fell softly asleep. When she had slumbered enough and was refreshed, she rose to her feet. The tempest had passed from her soul. She beheld a grove of huge and lofty trees, she beheld a transparent fountain of glassy water. In the very heart of the grove beside the gliding stream there stood a palace, built by no human hands but by the cunning of a god. You will perceive so soon as I have taken you within, that it is the pleasant and luxurious dwelling of some deity that I present to your gaze. For the fretted roof on high was curiously carved of sandalwood and ivory, and the columns that upheld it were of gold. All the walls were covered with wild beasts and other like creatures of the field, wrought in chased silver, and confronting the gaze of those that entered. Truly he was a wondrous wight, nay, he was some demigod, or rather in very truth a god, that had power by the subtlety of his matchless skill to put such wild life into silver. The pavement was of precious stones cut small and patterned with images of many kinds. Most surely, aye, again and yet again I say it, blessed are those whose feet tread upon gems and jewels. The rest of the house through all its length and breadth was precious

beyond price. All the walls were built of solid ingots of gold and shone with peculiar splendour, making a daylight of their own within the house, even though the sun should withhold his beams. Such were the lightnings flashed from bedchamber and colonnade and from the very doors themselves. Nor were the riches in the rest of the house unworthy of such splendour. It seemed a heavenly palace built by great Jove that he might dwell with mortal men. Allured by the charm and 2
beauty of the place, Psyche drew near and, as her confidence increased, crossed the threshold. Soon the delight of gazing on such loveliness drew her on to explore each several glory until at last on the farther side of the house she beheld a lofty chamber piled high with countless treasure. Naught may be found in all the world that was not there. But wondrous as was the sight of such vast wealth, yet more marvellous was it that there was no chain nor bar nor sentinel to guard the treasure of all the world. Deep joy filled her at the sight, when suddenly a bodiless voice spake to her. "Why, lady," it said, "are you overwhelmed at the sight of so great wealth? All is yours. Go now to your chamber, refresh your weariness upon your couch, and bathe when it pleases you so to do. We, whose voices you hear, are your servants who will wait upon you diligently and, when you have refreshed your body, will straightway serve you with a royal banquet."

When she heard these bodiless voices Psyche per- 3
ceived that their instructions and all the treasure of the palace must be the gift of some god that watched

over her. First for a while she slept, then waking, bathed to refresh her weariness. This done, she beheld hard by a couch shaped like a half-moon, and, deeming from the dinner service spread beside it that it was meant for her refreshment, gladly laid her down. Forthwith she was served with wine like nectar, and many a dish of diverse viands. Yet no man waited on her, but all things seemed wafted to her as it were by some wind. Neither could she see any man, only she heard words that fell from the air, and none save voices were her servants. After she had feasted thus daintily, one whom she might not see entered and sang to her, while another struck the lyre, though never a lyre was to be seen. Then the harmony of a multitude of musicians was borne to her ears, so that she knew that a choir
4 was there, though no man was visible. These delights over, Psyche went to her bed, for the hour was late. Now when night was well advanced a soft sound came to her ears. She trembled for her honour, seeing that she was all alone; she shook for terror, and her fear of the unknown surpassed by far the fear of any peril that ever she had conceived. At length her unknown husband came and climbed the couch, made Psyche his bride, and departed in haste before the dawn. And forthwith the voices came to her chamber and served all her needs. So for a long time her life passed by, till at length as nature ordains, what seemed strange at first, by force of continued habit became a delight and the sound of the voices cheered her loneliness and perplexity.

Meanwhile her parents grew old and feeble by reason of the tireless torment of their grief. The news of it was noised abroad and the elder sisters learned all that had befallen. Then grief and mourning straightway fell upon them, they left their homes and vied with one another in their haste to have sight and speech of their parents once again. Now that very night Psyche's 5
husband thus addressed her—for though she saw not her unknown spouse, her hands had felt him and her ear could hear him.[1] "Sweet Psyche, my beloved wife, Fortune is turned cruel and threatens thee with deadly peril. Watch, be most cautious and beware. Thy sisters believe thee dead and are distraught with grief. They will seek thee and visit yonder crag. But if thou shouldst chance to hear their lamentations, answer them not, nay do not even look forth from the house; else thou wilt drive me to bitter woe and thyself to utter destruction." Psyche assented and promised she would do as her husband willed. But when he left her with the passing of night, the poor girl burst into weeping and consumed the whole day in tears and lamentation, crying that now in truth she was utterly undone; for she was kept a close captive within the walls of her luxurious prison and deprived of all human converse. She might not even bring consolation to her sisters that mourned her loss, nor even so much as set eyes on them. She would take no refreshment, she bathed not nor ate, but weeping floods of tears retired to sleep. After a little her husband 6

[1] *is nihilo secius* (Haupt).

came to her side somewhat earlier than his wont, caught her still weeping to his arms, and thus upbraided her:—

"Was this thy promise, my sweet Psyche? What can I, thy husband, now hope or expect of thee? Night and day thou ceasest not from thine anguish, nay, not even when thy husband clasps thee to his heart. Come, now, be it as thou wilt! Obey thy heart, though its craving bring thee naught but harm. Only remember when later thou repentest, that I warned thee in good earnest." But Psyche, when she heard these words, broke into entreaties, then threatened that she would slay herself, and at last prevailed upon her husband to grant her desire, that she might see her sisters, soothe their sorrows, and have speech with them. He yielded to the prayers of his new-wed bride, and further gave her leave to present her sisters with what she would of gold or jewels. But he warned her again and again, with words that struck terror to her soul, never to let her sisters persuade her by their ill counsels to inquire what like her husband was; if she yielded to the impious promptings of curiosity, she would exile herself for ever from his embraces and from all the profusion of wealth that now was hers. She thanked her husband and her soul was somewhat cheered. Then said she, "Sooner would I die a hundred deaths than be robbed of thy sweet love. For whoe'er thou art, I love thee and adore thee passionately, even as I love life itself. Compared with thee Cupid's self were as naught. But grant this boon also, I beseech

thee, to my prayers, and bid thy servant, the wind of the West, to bring my sisters hither even as he bore me. Then she rained on him beguiling kisses and endearing words and embraces that should constrain him to her will, and beside these allurements called him "husband sweet as honey, Psyche's life and love." Her husband yielded to the power and spell of her passionate murmurs, yielded against his will, and promised to do all; and then as dawn drew near, vanished from his wife's arms. Meanwhile her sisters had made 7
inquiry as to the situation of the crag, where Psyche had been left, and hastened to the spot. And when they were come there, they began to beat their breasts and weep their eyes blind, until all the rocks and cliffs made answer, echoing to their ceaseless cries of grief. And now they began to call on their unhappy sister by name, till the piercing sound of their lamentable crying descended the steep, and Psyche ran forth from the house in an ecstasy of trembling joy. "Why," she cried, "do ye torment yourselves with these vain cries of woe? I, whom you mourn, am here. Cease from your mournful cries and dry at length those cheeks that so long have streamed with tears, for even now you may embrace her whom you bewailed." Then calling the West-wind, she told him of her husband's command, and he forthwith did as he was bidden, and bore them down into the valley safe and sound on the wings of his soft breath. There the sisters embraced with eager kisses and took delight of one another, till the tears that they had dried welled forth again for

very joy. Then said Psyche, "Come now, enter with joy the house that is my home, and refresh your afflicted
8 hearts with the presence of your own Psyche." So saying, she showed them all the riches of the golden house, and made known to their ears the great household of voices that waited on her. Then she refreshed their weariness in the fairest of baths and with all the rich dainties of that celestial table, till, their senses sated with the affluence of her heavenly wealth, they began to foster envy deep in their inmost hearts. At length one of them began to question her without ceasing, very closely and curiously, as to who was the lord of these celestial marvels, and who or of what like was her husband. Nevertheless, Psyche would in no wise transgress her husband's ordinance or banish it from the secret places of her soul, but on the spur of the moment feigned that he was young and fair to view, his cheeks just shadowed with a beard of down, and that he was for the most part busied with the chase of beasts among the mountains or along the country-side. Then for fear that as their talk went on she might make some slip and betray her secret, she loaded them with gifts of wrought gold and jewelled necklaces, and calling the West-wind committed them to his charge, to be carried back to the place from whence they came.
9 This done, those good sisters of hers returned home, and the gall of rising envy burned fierce within them, and they began to talk with one another oft and loud and angrily. At last one of them spoke as follows, "Oh! cruel and unkind, unprofitable Fortune! Was

this thy will that we, born of the same parents as Psyche, should endure so different a lot? Are we, the elder, who have been given to alien kings to be their handmaidens, and banished from our home and country, to dwell like exiles far from our parents? And is she, the youngest, the last offspring of our mother's weary womb, to be the mistress of such treasure and have a god for husband? Why, she has not even the wit to know how to use such overflowing fortune aright. Did you see, sister, how many and how rich are the jewels that lie in her house, what shining raiment and what glistening gems are there, and how where'er one goes one walks on gold, abundant gold? Nay, if she has a husband as fair as she told us, there lives no happier woman in all the world. Woman, did I say? It may be that as his love increases and his passion gathers its full force, the god whom she has wedded will make her also a goddess. Nay, in good truth she is a goddess already; such was her carriage, such her mien. The woman who has voices for handmaids, and can command even the winds, is aiming high and breathes a goddess's pride even now. Whereas I, poor wretch, have got a husband older than my father, balder than a pumpkin, and feebler than any child, and he keeps the whole house under lock and key."

The other took up the strain. "I am afflicted by a husband so doubled and bent with rheumatism, that he never gives a thought to love. I have to rub his gnarled and stony fingers, till my soft hands are

blistered with his dirty bandages and stinking lotion and filthy plasters. I am more than an attentive wife, I am a hard-worked sick-nurse. You may endure your misfortunes with patience, or rather—for I will speak my mind plainly—with servility. As for me, I cannot any longer endure that such wealth and fortune should have fallen to one so unworthy. Remember with what pride and arrogance she dealt with us, with what boastful and extravagant ostentation she revealed her haughty temper! How scanty were the gifts she gave us from the vastness of her store, and how grudgingly she gave! And then, when she was tired of our presence, she had us bundled off and blown away upon a whistling breeze. If I am a woman and have a spark of life in me, I'll oust her from her fortune. And if, as I should suppose, our outrageous treatment rankles in your heart as it does in mine, let us both take resolute action. Let us not reveal our wrong to our parents or any other human being, let us not even seem to know anything of how she fares. It is enough that we have seen what we would gladly not have seen, without our declaring such glad news of her to our parents and all mankind. Those are not truly rich of whose wealth no man knows aught. She shall learn that we are her elder sisters and not her handmaids. But now let us go to our husbands and revisit our homes, which, even if they are poor, are at least respectable. Then when we have taken earnest thought and formed our plans, let us return in our might to crush her pride."

11 This counsel of evil, where good should have been,

pleased these evil women. They hid all the precious gifts they had received and began with feigned grief to weep once more, rending their hair and tearing their faces, as indeed they deserved to be torn. Then after hastily deterring their parents from further search by rekindling the burning anguish of their grief, they went swollen with mad rage to their own homes there to contrive their wicked schemes against their innocent sister, aye, even to devise her death.

Meanwhile Psyche's unknown husband once more admonished her as he talked with her in the darkness of night. "Dost thou see," he said, "how great is thy peril? Fortune as yet but skirmishes at the outposts. Unless thou art firm and cautious while she is yet far off, she will close hand to hand. Those false she-wolves are weaving some deep plot of sin against thee, whereof the purpose is this: that they shall persuade thee to seek to know my face, which, as I have told thee, if once thou seest, thou shalt see no more. And so if hereafter those wicked ghouls come hither armed with their dark designs—and they will come, that I know—speak not at all with them, or if thy simple unsuspecting soul be too tender to endure that, at least neither give ear nor utterance to aught concerning thy husband. For soon we shall have issue, and even now thy womb, a child's as yet, bears a child like to thee. If thou keep my secret in silence, he shall be a god; if thou divulge it, a mortal."

This news made Psyche glad; she lifted her head 12
and rejoiced that she should be blest with a divine

child. She exulted in the glory of the babe that should be, and was proud that she should be called a mother. Anxiously she counted the days as they increased and the months that passed by, and marvelled as the promise grew. But now those curses twain, those foul Furies breathing adder's poison, hastened toward their goal, and came sailing on their course with impious speed. Then her husband, who came not save for the brief space of night, warned Psyche once again. "The last day, the final peril is upon thee; those hateful women, thy kin and yet thy foes, have put their armour on, have struck their camp, set the battle in array and blown the trumpet-blast; thy monstrous sisters have drawn the sword and seek thy life. Alas! sweetest Psyche, what calamities are upon us! Pity thyself and me, keep holy silence and save thine house, thine husband, thyself, and our young babe from the doom of ruin that lowers over them. Neither see nor hear those wicked women—sisters I may not call them—for they have conceived unnatural hate for thee and have trodden underfoot the bonds of blood. Oh! take no heed when, like the Sirens, they stand forth upon the crag and make the cliffs echo with their fatal voices."

13 Psyche replied, her voice broken with tearful sobs, "Long since, methinks, thou hast had proof of my fidelity and discretion. Not less even now will I show how steadfast is my soul. Only do thou once more bid our servant the West-wind to perform his office. Thou hast denied me sight of thy holy form, grant me at least that I may see my sisters. By thy locks that

hang all round thy brow, sweet as scent of cinnamon, by thy soft delicate cheeks so like to mine, by thy bosom that burns with such strange heat, I implore thee, by my hopes that at least I may behold thy face in the face of this our babe, I beseech thee, grant the pious prayer of mine anguished entreaty, suffer me to enjoy the embraces of my sisters, and make the soul of Psyche, thy votary, take new life for joy. I seek no more to see thy face ; not even the dark of night can be a hindrance to my joy, for I hold thee in mine arms, light of my life." With these words and soft embraces she charmed her husband to her will. Wiping away her tears with his own locks, he promised he would do as she desired, and straightway departed before the light of dawning day.

The leagued conspirators, the two sisters, did not so 14
much as set eyes on their parents, but hastened with headlong speed to the crag. They tarried not for the coming of the wind that should bear them, but with presumptuous daring leapt forth into the abyss. But the West-wind forgot not the bidding of his king, though he had gladly done so, and caught them to the bosom of his breathing air and set them down upon the ground. They made no delay, but entered the house side by side ; and there they that were Psyche's sisters but in name embraced their prey and, hiding beneath a cheerful mien the guile that was stored within their hearts as it had been a treasure, spake thus to her with fawning words : "Psyche, thou art no longer a child, nay thou art even now a mother. Think what a joy to us thou

bearest in thy womb, with what delight thou shalt make glad all our home. Ah! blessed are we that shall rejoice to nurse thy golden babe, who if he match, as match he should, his parents' beauty, will be born a very Cupid."

15 Thus step by step with feigned love they wormed their way into their sister's heart. And straightway when she had bidden them sit down, and had refreshed them from the weariness of their journey, and cheered them with steaming water at the bath, she feasted them royally in her banqueting hall on all those wondrous dainties and savoury stews. She bade the harp sound, and forthwith its chords made melody; she bade the flute play, and its voice was heard; she bade the choir sing, and their chant pealed forth. The hearts of those that heard were made glad by all this ravishing music, although they saw no man. But yet not even the honeyed sweetness of those strains might allay the wicked purpose of those accursed women. They turned their speech to frame the snare that their guile had made ready, and with false words began to ask her of what like her husband was, what was his family, what his rank. Then Psyche in the utter simplicity of her heart, forgot her former tale and devised a new falsehood, and said that her husband came from the next province, had vast sums invested in business, and was middle-aged, his hair just grizzled with a few grey hairs. She spoke only for a moment on this matter and then, loading her sisters once more with costly gifts, sent them away in the chariot of the wind.

But they, when the soft breath of the west had lifted 16
them on high, and they were returning homeward, began to speak thus one to the other: "What are we to say, sister, of so monstrous a falsehood as that which the poor fool told us? The first time her husband was a youth with manhood's first down upon his chin; now he is middle-aged in all the glory of white hairs. Who can he be whom so short a space of time has thus transformed into an old man? My sister, there are but two alternatives. Either the wretch lies, or else she does not know what her husband is like. Whichever of these explanations is true, it is our duty to cast her forth from that wealth of hers as soon as we may. But if she has never seen her husband's face, clearly she has married a god and it is a god that she bears in her womb. Now, if she come to be called the mother of a baby god—which heaven forbid!—I will get a noose and hang myself. Meanwhile, let us return home to our parents and devise some cunning deceit such as may suit our present discourse."

So hot with anger were they, that they scarce deigned 17
a word of greeting for their parents, and passed a sleepless and disturbed night. On the morrow these abandoned women hastened to the crag and swooped swiftly down as before under the protection of the wind. Then forcing a few tears from their eyes by rubbing their lids, they addressed their young sister with these crafty words: "Ah! thou art happy, for thou livest in blessed ignorance of thine evil plight and hast no suspicion of thy peril. But we, who cannot sleep for the

care with which we watch over thy happiness, are torn with anguish for thy misfortunes. For we have learned the truth and, since we are partners of thy grief and hapless plight, we may not hide it from thee. He that lies secretly by thy side at night is a huge serpent with a thousand tangled coils; blood and deadly poison drip from his throat and from the cavernous horror of his gaping maw. Bethink thee of Apollo's oracle, how it proclaimed that thou shouldst be the bride of some fierce beast. Moreover, many a farmer, many a hunter of this neighbourhood, and many of those that dwell round about, have seen him as he returns from devouring his
18 prey or swims in the shallows of yonder river. And all affirm that thou shalt not much longer feast on such dainties or receive such loving service, but so soon as thy time has come, he will devour thee with the ripe fruit of thy womb. The hour has now come when thou must choose whether thou wilt believe thy sisters, whose sole care is for thy dear safety, wilt flee from death and live with us, free from all thought of peril, or find a grave in the entrails of a cruel monster. If the musical solitude of this fair landscape, if the joys of thy secret love still delight thee, and thou art content to lie in the embraces of a foul and venomous snake, at least we, thy loving sisters, have done our duty."

Poor Psyche, for she was a simple and gentle soul, was seized with terror at this melancholy news; she was swept beyond the bounds of reason, forgot all her husband's warnings and all her own promises. Headlong she fell into the deeps of woe, her limbs trembled

and her hue turned pale and bloodless, and in stumbling accents she stammered forth these scarce articulate words. "Dearest sisters," she said, "you are true to 19
your love for me, as was meet and right. And methinks that those who told you these things lie not. For never have I seen my husband's face nor known at all whence he comes. Only at night I hear soft murmured words and endure the embraces of a husband who shuns the light and whose shape I know not. You say well that he is some strange beast, and I accept your words. For ever with stern speech he terrifies me from seeking to have sight of him, and threatens great woe to me should I strive curiously to look upon his face. Now therefore, even now, help me, if there be any succour ye may bring to your sister in her hour of peril. For you will undo all your former good deeds, if you allow indifference to usurp the place of love."

Then since they had reached their sister's inmost heart and laid it bare to view, and its portals stood open wide, those evil women abandoned the secret stealth of their dark scheming, unsheathed the swords of guile, and invaded the timorous thoughts of the simple-hearted girl. Then said one of them, "Since 20
the ties of birth bid us disregard all peril, if only we may save thee, we will make known to thee the course that long thought has revealed to us, even the sole path that leads to safety. Take the sharpest of razors, aye, and whet it yet sharper by rubbing it softly against the palm of thy hand, then hide it on that side of thy couch where thou art wont to lie. Take too some handy

lantern, filled with oil and burning with a clear light, and place it beneath the cover of some vessel. Conceal all these preparations most carefully, and then, when he enters, trailing his moving coils, and climbs to his couch as is his wont, wait till he is stretched at full length and caught in the stupor of his first sleep, and his breathing tells thee that his slumber is deep; then glide from the bed and barefoot, on tiptoe, moving soft with tiny steps, free the lantern from its prison in the blind dark. Let the light teach thee how thou mayest perform thy glorious deed, then raise thy right hand, put forth all thy strength, and with the two-edged blade hew through the joint that knits the head and neck of the deadly serpent. Our aid shall not fail thee. As soon as thou hast won safety by his death, we will hasten eagerly to thy side, join hands with thine to bear away all thy treasure, find thee a wedlock worthy of thy prayers and unite thee to a husband as human as thyself."

21 With these words they enflamed their sister's burning heart—for in truth her heart was all afire—and then left her, for they feared exceedingly to remain on the spot where so great a crime was to be done. As before they were borne to the crag's top by the blast of the winged breeze, sped away in hasty flight, entered their ships and departed.

Psyche was left alone—and yet she was not at all alone, for the fierce furies that vexed her soul were ever with her. She tossed to and fro upon a tide of troubles vast as the sea. Her resolve was made and

her heart fixed, yet as she strove to nerve her hands for the deed, her purpose failed her and was shaken, and she was distraught by the host of passions that were born of her anguish. Impatience, indecision, daring and terror, diffidence and anger, all strove within her, and, worst of all, in the same body she hated the beast and loved the husband. Yet as evening began to draw on to night, with precipitate haste she made all ready for her hideous crime. Now night was come and with it her husband; he caught her in his arms, kissed her, and sank into a deep sleep.

Then Psyche—for though flesh and spirit were weak 22
and trembled, yet the fierce will of destiny gave her force—summoned all her strength, drew forth the lantern and seized the razor; a sudden courage displaced the weakness of her sex. But so soon as the lamplight revealed the secrets of the couch, she saw the kindest and sweetest of all wild beasts, even Cupid himself, fairest of gods and fair even in sleep, so that even the flame of the lamp, when it beheld him, burned brighter for joy and lightnings flashed from the razor's sacrilegious blade. But Psyche at the marvel of that sight was all dismayed, her soul was distraught, a sickly pallor came over her, fainting and trembling she sank to her knees, and sought to hide the blade in her own heart. And this she would assuredly have done, had not the steel slipped from her rash hands for terror of so ill a deed. Weary and desperate, fallen from her health of mind and body, she gazed again and again upon the beauty of that divine face,

and her soul drew joy and strength. She beheld the glorious hair of his golden head streaming with ambrosia, the curling locks that strayed over his snow-white neck and crimson cheeks, some caught in a comely tangle, some hanging down in front, others behind; and before the lightnings of their exceeding splendour even the light of the lamp grew weak and faint. From the shoulders of the winged god sprang dewy pinions, shining like white flowers, and the topmost feathers, so soft and delicate were they, quivered tremulously in restless dance, though all the rest were still. His body was smooth and very lovely and such as Venus might be proud to have borne. Before the feet of the god lay bow, quiver, and arrows, the kindly weapons of the great
23 god. Psyche gazed on them with insatiate heart and burning curiosity, took them in her hands and marvelled at her husband's armoury. Then taking an arrow from the quiver, she tried its point against her thumb. But her hand trembled and pressed too hard upon it, till the point pricked too deep and tiny blood-drops bedewed the surface of her skin. So all unwitting, yet of her own doing, Psyche fell in love with Love. Then as her passion for passion's lord burned her ever more and more, she cast herself upon him in an ecstasy of love, heaped wanton kiss on kiss with thirsty hastening lips, till she feared he might awake. But even as her swooning spirit wavered in the ecstasy of such bliss, the lamp, whether it were foul falseness or guilty envy moved it, or whether it longed itself to touch and kiss so fair a body, sputtered forth from the top of its flame

a drop of burning oil, which fell upon the god's right shoulder. Ah! rash lamp and overbold! love's unworthy servant, thou burnest the very lord of fire, although surely thou dost owe thy being to some lover, who devised thee that even by night he might have all his desire. For the god when he felt the burning smart, leapt from the couch and, seeing his secret thus foully betrayed, tore himself from the kisses and embraces of his unhappy bride, and flew away with never a word. But poor Psyche, even as he rose, 24
caught hold of his right leg with both her hands, clung to him as he soared on high and would not leave him, but followed him for the last time as he swept through the clouds of air, till at last o'erwearied she fell to earth.

But the god her lover left her not lying thus on earth, but flew to a cypress hard by, and from its lofty top spoke to her thus in accents of woe: 'Ah! Psyche, simple-hearted, I forgot the commands of my mother Venus, who bade me fire thee with passion for some miserable abject man and yoke thee in wedlock to him, and myself flew to thy side that I might be thy lover in his place. But this I did thoughtlessly, as now I know. For I, the far-famed archer, wounded myself with my own shafts, and made thee my bride to win this reward—that thou shouldst deem me a wild beast, and shouldst hew off my head with blade of steel, that head where dwell these eyes that love thee so dearly. Again and again I bade thee beware of all this that thou hast done, and in my love forewarned

thee. But those admirable women, thy counsellors, shall forthwith pay the penalty for their disastrous admonitions; thee I will only punish thus—by flying from thee." And with the words he spread his pinions and soared into the sky.

25 But Psyche, though she lay bowed to the earth, followed her husband's flight as far as sight could reach, and tormented her soul with lamentation. But when the oarage of his wings had borne him far, and the depth of air had snatched him from her sight, she flung herself headlong from the brink of a river that flowed hard by. But the kindly stream feared for himself, and, to do honour to the god who kindles even waters with his fire, straightway caught her in his current and laid her unhurt upon a bank deep in flowering herbage. It chanced that at that moment Pan, the god of the country-side, sat on the river's brow with Echo, the mountain-goddess, in his arms, teaching her to make melodious answer to sounds of every kind. Close by along the bank goats wandered as they browsed, and wantoned as they plucked the river's leafage. The goat-footed god called Psyche to him gently, for she was bruised and swooning, and he knew moreover what had befallen her; and thus he assuaged her pain with these gentle words:—

"Fair maiden, I am but a rude rustic shepherd, but long old age and ripe experience have taught me much. Nay, if I guess aright (though men that are wise call it no guess, but rather divination), thy weak and tottering steps, thy body's exceeding pallor, and thy unceasing

sighs, aye, and still more thy mournful eyes, tell me that thou faintest beneath excess of love. Wherefore give ear to me and seek no more to slay thyself by casting thyself headlong down, nor by any manner of self-slaughter. Cease from thy grief and lay aside thy sorrow, and rather address Cupid, the mightiest of gods, with fervent prayer and win him to thee by tender submission, for he is an amorous and soft-hearted youth."

So spake the shepherd god. Psyche made no 26
answer, but worshipped the deity that had showed her the path of safety and went upon her way. But when she had wandered no small way with weary feet, about close of day she came by a path she knew not to a certain town, where the husband of one of her sisters held sway. When she learned this, Psyche begged that her presence might be announced to her sister. She was led into the palace and there when they had made an end of greeting and embracing one another, her sister asked her the reason of her coming. Psyche made answer thus: "Thou rememberest the counsel thou didst give me, when thou didst urge me to take a two-edged razor and slay the wild beast that lay with me under the false name of husband, before my wretched body fell a victim to his voracious maw. But as soon as I took the lamp for my witness—for such, alas! was thy counsel—and looked upon his face, I saw a wondrous, nay, a celestial sight, even the son of Venus, even Cupid himself, lying hushed in gentle slumber. Transported by the sight of so much joy,

and distraught by my exceeding gladness, my ecstasy was almost more than I could endure. But at that moment, by a cruel stroke of chance, the lamp spurted forth a drop of burning oil, which fell upon his shoulder. The pain wakened him forthwith from sleep, he saw me armed with fire and blade of steel and cried, 'In atonement for the foul crime thou hast purposed, begone from my couch and take with thee what is thine. I will marry thy sister'—and he mentioned thy name—'with all due ritual.' So saying, he bade the West-wind blow me beyond the confines of the house."

27 Psyche had scarcely finished when her sister, goaded by the stings of mad lust and guilty envy, tricked her husband with a cunningly contrived lie, pretending that she had just received the news of her parents' death, and without more ado took ship and went to that same crag. And there, though it was no wind of the west that blew, yet, aflame with all the greed of blind hope, she cried, "Take me, Cupid, a wife that is worthy thee, and thou, wind of the west, bear up thy mistress." So saying, she hurled herself headlong in one mighty leap. But not even in death might she reach that happy place. For her limbs were tossed from rock to rock among the crags and torn asunder, and afterwards, as she deserved, she provided food for the birds and beasts who devoured her entrails. Such was the manner of her end.

Nor was the doom of Cupid's second vengeance long delayed. For Psyche once more was led by her wander-

ing feet to another city, where the other sister dwelt, as had dwelt the first. And even as the first, she too was ensnared by Psyche's guile and, seeking in wicked rivalry to supplant her sister as the bride of Love, hastened to the crag, and perished by the same death.

Meanwhile as Psyche wandered in search of Cupid 28
from people to people, he lay in his mother's chamber groaning for the pain of the wound that the lamp had dealt him. Then that white bird, the seamew that swims over the surface of the waves oared by its wings, hastily plunged into the deep bosom of Ocean. There he found Venus, as she was bathing and swimming, and taking his stand by her told her that her son had been burned, that he was full of anguish at the wound's great pain, and lay in peril of his life. Further he told her that the whole household of Venus had been brought into evil repute, and suffered all manner of railing, "because," said the bird, "both thou and he have retired from the world, he to revel with a harlot in the mountains, and thou, goddess, to swim the sea. Wherefore there has been no pleasure, no joy, no merriment anywhere, but all things lie in rude unkempt neglect; wedlock and true friendship and parents' love for their children have vanished from the earth; there is one vast disorder, one hateful loathing and foul disregard of all bonds of love." Such were the words with which that garrulous and most inquisitive bird, as he chattered into Venus' ear, lacerated the reputation of her son. Venus was filled with anger and cried with a sudden cry, "And so that good son of mine has got a mistress!

Come tell me, bird, my only faithful servant, what is the name of this woman who has thus distracted my son, a simple boy not yet promoted to the garb of manhood. Tell me, is it one of the Nymphs or Hours? Or is it one of the Muses' choir, or one of my own attendant Graces?"

The loquacious bird had no thought of silence. "Mistress," he replied, "I know not who she is. I think, however, if my remembrance does not play me false, that he was head over ears in love with a girl called Psyche." Then Venus in her indignation cried yet louder still, "What! he loves Psyche, the supplanter of my beauty and the rival of my fame! Why, the young scamp must think me his procuress, for it was I showed him the girl and it was through me he came to know her!"

29 Shrieking such words as these, she emerged from the sea and straightway sought her golden chamber. And finding the boy lying sick even as she had heard, she railed loudly at him so soon as she reached the door of the room. "Truly thy behaviour is most honourable and worthy thy birth and thine own good name, first to trample thy mother's, nay, thy queen's bidding underfoot, to refuse to torment my enemy with base desires, and then actually to take her to thine own wanton embraces, mere boy as thou art, so that I must needs endure mine enemy as my daughter-in-law! Oh! thou worthless boy, unfilial child! Oh! thou seducer, thou think'st forsooth that thou alone canst have offspring and that I am too old to bear a child. I would have thee know

therefore, that I will bear me a far better son than thou hast been. Nay, that the insult may have a sharper sting, I will adopt one of my own young slaves, give him thy feathers and thy flames, thy bow and arrows and all the trappings I gave thee for use far other than that which thou hast made of them. For naught of all that went to make up thine accoutrements came from thy father's estate! Thou hast been badly trained from 30
thy babyhood till now; thou hast sharp talons and hast ofttimes beaten thine elders in the most irreverent manner, nay, thou robbest thy mother, even me, I say! thou robbest me daily, thou unnatural son! Thou hast often stricken me, thou treatest me with scorn as being a widow and showest not the least reverence for thy stepfather, the greatest and bravest of all warriors. Why, thou hast even served him with paramours, because thou art angry with my love for him! But I will make thee rue those tricks and thy marriage shall be as bitter gall in thy mouth. But what shall I do now to avenge my mockery? Whither shall I turn? How shall I restrain this foul little eft? Shall I seek aid from my foe Sobriety, whom I have so oft offended to satisfy his whims? No, I cannot endure the thought of speaking to a creature so rude and unkempt. On the other hand, my vengeance is not to be despised from whatever source it come. I *will* seek her aid and hers alone. She shall punish that young ne'er-do-weel right soundly, empty his quiver and blunt his arrows, unstring his bow and extinguish the flames of his torch, aye, and apply even sharper remedies to his body itself. Only then shall

I feel my wrong appeased when she has clipped his hair close, that hair to which I with my own hands gave its sheen of gold, and when she has shorn away those wings which I steeped in nectar as he lay in my bosom."

31 So speaking, she flung out of doors in bitter anger, and ah! how bitter the wrath of Venus can be! But Ceres and Juno straightway met her and, seeing her face thus distorted with passion, asked why she had imprisoned all the charm of her flashing eyes with so fierce a frown. She answered, "It is well you have met me! For my heart is all on fire, and I should have done some violence. But go, I pray you, with all your might seek out that wretch Psyche, who has made off as if on wings. For you cannot be ignorant of the shame that has befallen my house, nor of the deeds of my unspeakable son."

Then they, although they knew well what had come to pass, strove to soothe the wrath of Venus. "What great crime," they asked, "has thy son committed, that thou shouldst denounce his pleasures so fiercely, and seek to kill her whom he loves? Even if he has smiled not unwillingly on a charming girl, is that a crime? Knowest thou not that he is a man and young? Or hast thou forgotten the number of his years? Or dost thou think he must always be a boy merely because he carries his years so fairly? And must thou, his mother, a sensible woman too, always be prying curiously into thy son's amusements, blaming him for a wanton, taunting him with his loves, and denouncing thine own arts and thine own charms that live again in thy fair son?

Who among gods and men will permit thee to sow passions broadcast among the peoples of the earth, whilst thou forbiddest thine own household the charms of love, and dost debar them from all enjoyment of woman's foibles, an enjoyment that is open to all the world?"

Thus the goddesses, in fear of Cupid's arrow, gladly took up his defence and flattered him even in his absence. But Venus, indignant that her wrongs should be treated with such ridicule, passed them by and departed in the opposite direction, seeking the sea with hasty steps.

BOOK VI

1 MEANWHILE Psyche wandered hither and thither in restless agitation. Night and day she sought her husband and her heart could not find rest, but ever she yearned more and more, if the tender blandishments of a wife might not allay his anger, at least to appease him with the prayers of a slave. At last she saw a temple on the crest of a high mountain. "How do I know," she said, "that my lord may not dwell yonder?" And straightway she hastened thither, for hope and desire lent wings to her feet, though they were fainting beneath her for very weariness of her unending toil. And now she had nimbly surmounted the high ridge and entered and approached the sacred couch. There she saw ears of corn piled in a heap or twined into garlands; ears too of barley were there, and sickles and all the implements of the reaper's calling. But all lay at random, confused and uncared for, as though they had been cast idly down by the reapers' hands in the heat of noon. Psyche separated them all with care and arranged them in due order, each in its separate place; for she thought that she ought not to neglect the shrines or ceremonies of any god, but rather appeal to the kindness and pity of all.

2 While she was thus engaged with anxious industry, kindly Ceres came upon her and straightway cried aloud, "Is

it thou, poor Psyche? Venus in the madness of her heart tracks thy steps anxiously through all the world, seeking that she may mete out to thee the most cruel of punishments, and eager to avenge her wrong with all the might of her godhead. And yet dost thou now watch thus over mine offerings, and hast thou thought for aught save thine own safety?"

Then Psyche cast herself down on the ground before her, bedewing the goddess's feet with floods of tears, and sweeping the ground with her hair. And with manifold entreaties she besought that she might win pardon. "By thy right hand that bringeth fruit to the earth, by the glad rites of harvest, by the silent mysteries of thy sacred arks, by the winged chariots drawn by the dragons that serve thee, by the furrows of Sicilian fields, by the ravisher's car and the imprisoning earth, by the deep abyss where the lightless wedlock of Proserpine was celebrated, by the joyous return to the light when thou hadst found thy daughter, and by all else that the shrine of Attic Eleusis shrouds in silence, I beseech thee, succour the soul of helpless Psyche, thy suppliant. Suffer me to lie hid, if only for a few short days, amid yonder heap of corn-ears, that the wild anger of that mighty goddess may be assuaged by lapse of time, or at least that I may find a brief space of rest and refreshment for my strength that my long toil hath broken."

Ceres made answer, "Thy tearful prayers awake my 3
pity and I long to aid thee, but I may not quarrel with one who is my kinswoman. Moreover, I am bound to her also by old ties of friendship, and she has a good

heart after all. Wherefore leave my temple without more ado, and count it for the best that I have not kept thee here, nor given thee my protection."

This unlooked-for repulse doubled Psyche's affliction, and she turned back from the temple. As she went she saw in a twilight grove within a deep valley a temple built of cunning workmanship, and since she wished to leave no path to fairer hope untried, however doubtful it might be, but rather to implore the aid of every god, she approached the sacred portals. She saw there precious gifts and cloths embroidered with letters of gold hanging from the boughs of trees or fastened to the door-posts. And all these bore witness to the name of the goddess, to whom they had been dedicated in gratitude for boons received at her hand. Then Psyche sank to her knee and casting her hands about the altar, yet warm with sacrifice, wiped away her tears and thus made her prayer:—

4 "Sister and bride of mighty Jove, whether thou holdest thine ancient home at Samos, which alone hath glory from thy birth, thine infant wailing and thy nurture; or whether thou hauntest thy rich home in lofty Carthage, that honours thee as the maid that came down from heaven borne on the lion's back; or rulest thou over the glorious walls of Argos by the banks of Inachus, who proclaims thee bride of the Thunderer and queen of goddesses, thou whom all the East worships as Zygia and all the West hails as Lucina, be thou to me in my great need Juno the Saviour, and free me from the fear of imminent peril; for the toils I have

endured are great and I am very weary. Aye, and I know that, even uncalled, thou aidest mothers in peril when their time is near."

So prayed she, and forthwith Juno revealed herself to her in all the august majesty of her godhead, and straightway said, "Right gladly, by mine honour I swear it, right gladly would I grant thy prayers. But for very shame I may not aid thee against the will of Venus, my son's wife, whom I have ever loved as a daughter. Moreover, I am prevented by the laws forbidding harbourage to others' runaway slaves, save only with their master's consent."

This second shipwreck of her fortunes filled Psyche with terror. She had sought her winged husband all in vain and, despairing utterly of safety, thus brooded within herself: "What help now may I seek for the healing of my woes, since even these goddesses, for all their goodwill, may not lift their voice in my defence? Whither now may I turn, that am caught in so vast a snare? What house, what darkness may hide me safe from great Venus's inevitable eyes! Come then, take heart of grace! Thy poor hopes are shattered. Renounce them boldly and yield thee of thine own free-will to thy mistress, and assuage the fierce onset of her wrath by submission, late though it be. Who knows but thou mayest even find the husband thou hast sought so long, there in his mother's house!" And so she made ready for the uncertain issue of her submission, nay, rather for certain death, and meditated how she should begin her entreaties.

6 Venus meanwhile had abandoned all attempts to search her out on earth, and sought the skies. She bade her chariot be prepared, even the chariot that Vulcan had wrought for her of gold, and finished carefully with subtle art, and given her as a marriage gift, ere they passed the threshold of the bridal chamber. It shone where the artist's file had thinned the metal away, and the very loss of the gold had made it more precious. Four white doves, out of all the many that nested round their mistress' bedchamber, appeared and, hopping gaily forth and writhing their painted necks, entered the jewelled yoke; their mistress mounted the car and they flew forth bearing her on their way with joy. Sparrows wantoned in the air with twittering harmony, as they attended the chariot of the goddess, and every manner of sweet songbird proclaimed her coming with the melodious music of their honeyed strains. The clouds yielded before her path, heaven opened to his daughter, and the heights of air welcomed her with joy; nor had the musical servants of mighty Venus any fear of pouncing eagle or greedy hawk.

7 Then forthwith she turned her course to Jove's royal castle and, superb even in her supplications, demanded that Mercury, god of the ringing voice, should be placed at her disposal to lend her his aid. Jove's dark brow nodded assent, and straightway Venus descended from heaven in an ecstasy of joy, and addressed Mercury, who went with her, in these earnest words: "Arcadian brother, thou knowest that thy sister Venus hath never done aught without the aid

of Mercury, and thou canst not but be aware how long I have searched in vain for that handmaiden of mine who hides from me. There is nothing left for me but to employ thee as my herald and publish a reward for her discovery. See then that thou perform this my behest with speed, and set forth clearly the marks by which she may be known, that no one, who has wickedly and unlawfully taken upon him to conceal her, may plead ignorance as an excuse." So saying she gave him a handbill containing Psyche's name and all else that was necessary. This done, she went home.

Mercury neglected not to do as he was bidden. For 8
he sped far and wide, visiting all the peoples of the earth, and thus performed the task of proclamation with which he had been entrusted: "If any man can stay the flight or point out the hiding-place of a runaway princess, handmaid of Venus, answering to the name of Psyche, let him meet Mercury, that makes this proclamation, behind the Murcian Pyramids, and he shall receive as the reward of his information seven sweet kisses from Venus' own lips, and one yet more honeyed than the rest from the tip of her sweet tongue."

When Mercury delivered his proclamation in this wise, a wild desire seized all mankind, and they vied with one another in the hope of winning so marvellous a reward. This circumstance more than all else finally banished every thought of further delay from Psyche's soul. And as she was already approaching the doors of her mistress, one of Venus' servants, Habit by name,

met her and at once cried with all the strength of her voice, "So at last you have come to understand who is your mistress, you worthless slut! Or do you still pretend not to know what trouble we have had in looking for you? It would be in keeping with the rest of your effrontery if you did. But it is lucky you have fallen into my hands. Hell has you in its claws now, and you shall pay bitterly for your dis-
9 obedience, now, without more ado." Then without a moment's hesitation she thrust her hand into Psyche's hair and dragged her after her. Psyche made no resistance, but was led into the house and brought into the presence of Venus. The goddess no sooner beheld her than she burst into a wild laugh, such as men will utter when mad with wrath; then shaking her head and scratching her right ear, she cried, "So at length thou hast thought fit to come and greet thy mother-in-law? Or hast thou come to visit thy husband, who is in danger of his life, thanks to the wound thou gavest him? But thou needst not be frightened! I will give thee such a welcome as a good daughter-in-law deserves." Then "Where," she cried, "are my handmaidens Trouble and Sorrow?" These were summoned, and Venus handed over Psyche to their charge that they might torture her. And they in obedience to their mistress's command, scourged poor Psyche with whips and racked her with other torments, and then once more brought her into the presence of their mistress. Then Venus laughed loud once again and said, "Behold, she thinks to move me with pity because she is big with child and the time is

near when the fair fruit of her womb shall make me a happy grandmother. Truly I am highly blessed that I should be called a grandmother though yet in the flower of my age, and that the son of a vile serving-wench should be known as Venus's grandchild! But I am a fool to call him her son. He is no true son, for the parties to the marriage were not of equal birth, while the wedding took place in a country house, unwitnessed and without his father's consent. It cannot therefore be regarded as legitimate, and the child will be born a bastard, at least if we allow thee to become a mother at all."

So saying, she flew upon her, tore her clothes in many places, dishevelled her hair, buffeted her about the head and beat her cruelly. Then taking corn and barley and millet and poppyseed and chick-peas and lentils and beans, all jumbled and confused in one heap, she said to her, "I cannot conceive that any serving-wench as hideous as thyself could find any means to attract lovers save by making herself their drudge; wherefore now I myself will make trial of thy worth. Sort that disordered heap of seeds, place each kind of grain apart in its own place, and see that thou show me the work completed before this evening."

Having thus assigned her this vast heap of seeds, the goddess departed to a marriage feast. But Psyche never put a hand to that disordered and inextricable mass, but sat in silent stupefaction, overwhelmed by the vastness of the task. Then the ant, the little ant, that dweller in the fields, understanding the difficulty of her

huge task, pitied the sorrow of the great god's bride and, abhorring the cruelty of her mother-in-law, ran nimbly hither and thither, and summoned and gathered all the host of ants that dwelt around. "Pity," it cried, "O ye nimble nurslings of earth, the mother of all; pity a lovely girl, the spouse even of Love himself. Be prompt and swift and aid her in her hour of need!" Thereat, wave upon wave, the six-footed hosts rushed to the rescue, and one by one with the utmost zeal separated the whole heap, grain by grain, and after they had parted and distributed the several grains, each after their kind, they vanished swiftly from sight.

11 And now at nightfall Venus returned from the wedding feast, heavy with wine and sweet with balsam-scents and all her body bound about with shining roses. And when she saw with what marvellous diligence the task had been performed, she cried, "This is not thy doing, vile wretch, nor the work of thy hands, but the work of him whose heart thou didst win to thine own hurt, aye and to his hurt also." Then flinging her a crust of common bread, she departed to her couch. Meanwhile Cupid was kept under close ward in the inner part of the house within the four walls of his own chamber, partly that he might not inflame his wound by the perversity of his wanton passions, partly that he might not meet his beloved. And so those two lovers dragged out the night of woe beneath the same roof, but sundered and apart. But when Aurora had just begun to ride forth into the sky, Venus called Psyche to her and thus addressed her: "Seest thou that grove which fringes the

long banks of the gliding stream, whose deep eddies come rushing down from yonder mountain?[1] There wander sheep whose fleeces shine with hue of gold and no man guards them as they graze. I bid thee take a wisp from the wool of their precious fleece as best thou mayest and bring it me with speed."

Psyche arose willingly, not indeed that she might 12
perform her task, but that she might find rest from her woes by casting herself down a cliff that overhung the river. But from the river's bed a green reed, nurse of sweet music, breathed on by some breath divine, with gentle murmur whispered forth this melodious prophecy: "Psyche, racked though thou art by so many a woe, pollute not my sacred waters by slaying thyself thus miserably, nor at this hour approach those terrible sheep. For they borrow fierce heat from the blazing sun and wild frenzy maddens them, so that with sharp horns and foreheads hard as stone, and sometimes even with venomous bites, they vent their fury in the destruction of men. But till the heat of the noonday sun has assuaged its burning, and the beasts are lulled to sleep by the soft river breeze, thou canst hide thee beneath yonder lofty plane, which drinks of the river water even as I. And when once the sheep have abated their madness and allayed their anger, go shake the leaves of yonder grove and thou shalt find the golden wool clinging here and there to crooked twigs."

[1] *vicino monte desiliunt* (Rohde). The MSS. give *vicinum fontem despiciunt*, which is meaningless. No very plausible emendation has been suggested.

13 Thus did that kind and simple-hearted reed teach Psyche in her deep distress how she might win to safety. She listened with an attention which she had no cause to regret, and thus instructed made no delay, but observed all the bidding of the reed, stole the soft yellow gold with easy theft and returned to Venus with her bosom full of it. And yet she won no approval from her mistress for having overcome the peril of her second task. For Venus, with a frown upon her brow and a bitter smile upon her lips, said, "I am well aware who was the secret author of this deed no less than the last. But now I will put thee to a shrewd trial that I may know whether thou hast a stout heart and prudence beyond the prudence of woman. Dost thou see the high mountain peak that crowns yonder lofty cliff, wherefrom the swarthy waves of a black stream flow down till, caught in the neighbouring valley's walled abyss, they flood the Stygian swamps and feed the hoarse streams of Cocytus? Go, draw me icy water even from where on the high summit the fountain's farthest waves well forth, and bring it me with all speed in this small urn." So saying, she gave her a small jar carved out of crystal, and threatened yet more cruel torments if she failed.

14 Then Psyche with swift steps sought the topmost height of the mountain, sure that there at least, if all else failed, she could put an end to her miserable existence. But so soon as she reached the slopes near the aforesaid peak she perceived how vast and difficult was her task, and how fraught with death. For it was a rock of measureless height, rough, slippery, and in-

accessible, and from jaws that gaped in its midst it vomited forth a hideous stream which, from the very point where it burst from the hollows of a deep slanting cavern and fell over the rock's sloped face, had worn out a narrow channel for its path and, thus concealed, rushed secretly into the neighbouring valley. To right and left from crannies in the crag there crept forth fierce dragons, with long craning necks and eyes sworn to unwinking wakefulness, whose pupils keep watch for ever and shrink not from the light. And even the very waters had voices wherewith they forbade approach. For they cried, "Hence!" and "What dost thou? Have a care!" and "What wouldst thou? beware!" and "Fly!" and lastly, "Thou art doomed to die!" Psyche felt herself turned to stone by the impossibility of her task. Though she was present in the body, her senses had flown far away from her and, quite o'erwhelmed by such vast inevitable peril, she lacked even the last solace of tears. But the anguish of her innocent soul was not unmarked 15
by the grave eyes of kindly Providence. For the royal bird of highest Jove of a sudden spread both his pinions and came to her with timely aid, even the eagle, the ravisher, mindful of the ancient service rendered Jove when at Love's bidding he had swept from earth the Phrygian boy, that is his cupbearer. For he honoured Love's godhead in the woes of his bride, and leaving the shining paths of the high vault of heaven, swooped past Psyche's face and thus began, "Dost thou, simple-hearted and all unversed in such labours, hope to have power to steal or even touch so much as one drop of

that most holy and eke most cruel fountain? Thou hast surely heard tell, even if thou hast never read, that even the gods and Jove himself dread yonder Stygian waters, and even as you mortals swear by the divinity of the gods, so the gods swear by the majesty of Styx. But come, give me that urn!" Straightway he seized it and caught it to his body; then poised on the vast expanse of his beating pinions, swiftly he oared his way among the fierce jaws of teeth and the forked tongues of dragons that flickered to left and right. The waters denied him access[1] and bade[2] him depart ere he took some hurt. But he feigned that he sought them at Venus' bidding
16 and was her servant. Wherefore they suffered him to approach somewhat less grudgingly. So he took of the water and Psyche received the full urn with joy and bore it back with all speed to Venus.

Yet not even then could she appease the will of the frenzied goddess. For she threatened her with shameful torments yet worse and greater than before, and thus addressed her with a baleful smile upon her lips: "In truth, methinks thou art some great and potent sorceress, so nimbly hast thou obeyed my hard commands! But thou must do me yet this one service, sweetheart. Take this casket"—and with the words she gave it—"and straightway descend even to the world below and the ghastly halls of Orcus himself. There present the casket to Proserpine and say, 'Venus begs of thee that thou wilt send her a small portion of thy beauty, such at least as may suffice for the space of one brief day.

[1] *nolentes* (MSS.). [2] *minantes* (MSS.).

For all her beauty is worn and perished through watching over her sick son.' But see that thou come back with all speed, for I must anoint myself therewith before I go to heaven's theatre."

Then Psyche felt more than ever that her fortune 17
was come to its last ebb, and knew that all veil of pretence was laid aside, and that she was being driven to swift destruction. Well might she think so! For she was constrained with her own feet to tread the way to Tartarus and the spirits of the dead. She hesitated no longer, but went to a certain exceeding high tower that she might throw herself thence headlong. For thus she thought most swiftly and with greatest honour to descend to the world below. But the tower suddenly broke forth into speech and cried, "Why, poor wretch, seekest thou to slay thyself by casting thyself headlong down? And why rashly dost thou faint before this task, the last of all thy perils? For if once the breath be severed from thy body, thou wilt assuredly go to the depths of Tartarus, but thou shalt in no wise have power to return thence. Give ear to me. Lacedaemon, a famous city of Achaia, is not far distant. Do thou seek Taenarus, that lies upon its 18
borders hidden in a trackless wild. There is the vent of Dis, and through its gaping portals is shown a path where no man treads. Do thou cross the threshold and launch thyself upon the path and forthwith thou shalt find a straight way to the very palace of Orcus. Yet thou must not go empty-handed through the gloom, but must bear in both thy hands cakes kneaded of

pearl-barley and mead, and in thy mouth itself thou must bear two coins. And when thou hast traversed a good part of thy deathly journey, thou shalt meet a lame ass bearing wood, and with him a lame driver who will ask thee to hand him a few twigs that have fallen from the load. But do thou speak never a word, but pass on thy way in silence. And forthwith thou shalt come to the river of the dead, where Charon hath charge, and asks the ferryman's toll ere he conveys the traveller to the farther shore in his seamy bark. For avarice lives even among the dead, nor will Charon, or even the great god that is lord of hell, do aught unpaid; but the poor man when he dies must needs seek for journey-money, and if there be no coin of bronze to hand, no one will ever suffer him to breathe his last. Thou must give this filthy greybeard by way of toll one of the coins which thou shalt take with thee. But remember, he must take it with his own hand from thy mouth. Likewise, as thou crossest the sluggish river, a dead man that is floating on the surface will pray thee, raising his rotting hands, to take him into thy boat. But be thou not moved with pity for him,
19 for it is not lawful. And when thou hast crossed the river and gone a little way farther, old weaving women, as they weave their web, will beg thee lend them the aid of thy hands for a little. But thou must not touch the web; it is forbidden. For all these snares and many others spring from Venus's crafty designs against thee, that thou mayest let fall at least one of the cakes from thy hands. But think not the loss of that worthless

piece of barley-paste matters but little; for if thou lose but one, thou shalt lose with it the light of day. For there is a huge hound with three vast heads, wild and terrible, that bays with thunderous throat at the dead, though they are past all hurt that he might do them. Terrifying them with vain threats, he keeps sleepless watch before the very threshold of Proserpine's dark halls and guards the empty house of Dis. Bridle his rage by leaving him a cake to prey upon, and thou shalt pass him by with ease, and forthwith enter the very house of Proserpine. She shall welcome thee with kindly courtesy, bidding thee sit down and partake of a rich feast. But do thou sit upon the ground, and ask for coarse bread and eat it. Then tell wherefore thou hast come, take whatsoever shall be given thee, and returning back, buy off the hound's rage with the remaining cake. Then give the greedy mariner the coin thou hadst kept back and, when thou hast crossed the river, retrace thy former steps till thou behold once more yonder host of all the stars of heaven. But I bid thee, above all, beware that thou seek not to open or look within the casket which thou bearest, or turn at all with over-curious eyes to view[1] the treasure of divine beauty that is concealed within."

Thus did that far-seeing tower perform its task of prophecy. And Psyche tarried not, but went to Taenarus and, duly taking the coins and the cakes, ran down the path to the underworld, passed by the decrepit donkey-driver in silence, paid the river's toll to the

[1] *scrutari* (Van der Vliet).

ferryman, disregarded the prayer of the floating dead, spurned the crafty entreaties of the weaving women and, after she had lulled the dread fury of the hound by giving him a cake to devour, entered the house of Proserpine. And though her hostess offered her a soft chair and dainty food she would have none of them, but sat lowly at her feet, content with common bread, and delivered the message with which Venus had entrusted her. Straightway the casket was filled and sealed in secret. Psyche took it in her hands, silenced the hound's barking maw with the second cake, paid the second coin to the ferryman and, returning from the world below far more nimbly than she had descended, regained the shining daylight and worshipped it with adoration. But then, although she was in haste to bring her task to its conclusion, her mind was overwhelmed with rash curiosity. "Lo! what a fool am I," she said, "for I carry the gift of divine beauty, and yet
21 sip not even the least drop therefrom, even though by so doing I should win the grace of my fair lover." With the words she unclasped the casket. But there was no beauty therein, nor aught at all save a hellish and truly Stygian sleep which, so soon as it was set free by the removal of the lid, rushed upon her and poured over all her limbs in a thick cloud of slumber. She fell in the very path where she stood and the sleep possessed her where she fell. There she lay motionless, no better than a sleeping corpse. But Cupid, who was recovering from his wound, which had now healed, unable to endure the long absence of his sweet Psyche,

slipped through the lofty window of the bedchamber where he was confined and, since his wings had been refreshed by their long rest, flew forth swifter than ever and hastened to the side of his beloved Psyche. Carefully he wiped the sleep from off her and confined it in the casket, its former receptacle. Then waking Psyche with a harmless prick from one of his arrows, he said, "My poor child, thy curiosity had almost brought thee to destruction yet a second time. But meanwhile do thou make haste to perform the task with which my mother charged thee; I will see to the rest." So saying, her lover rose lightly upon his wings, and Psyche with all speed bore the gift of Proserpine to Venus.

Meanwhile Cupid, pale-faced and devoured with ex- 22
ceeding great love, and fearing the sudden earnestness that had possessed his mother, had recourse to his old tricks. Swift-winged he soared to heaven's farthest height, besought great Jove to aid him, and set forth his case. Thereupon Jove pinched Cupid's cheek, raised his hand to his lips, kissed it, and thus made answer: "My son and master, thou hast never shown me the honour decreed me by the gods, but with continued blows hast wounded this heart of mine whereby the laws of the elements and the motions of the stars are ordered, and hast brought shame upon me by oft-times causing me to fall into earthly lusts; thou hast hurt my good name and fame by tempting me to base adulteries in defiance of public law and order, nay thou hast even led me to transgress the Julian law itself; thou hast made me foully to disfigure my serene countenance

by taking upon me the likeness of serpents, fire, wild beasts and birds and cattle of the field. Yet, notwithstanding, mindful of my clemency and remembering that thou hast grown up in my arms, I will grant thee all thy suit on one condition. Thou shalt be on thy guard against thy rivals and, if there be on earth a girl of surpassing beauty, shalt repay my present bounty by making her mine."

23 Having thus spoken, he bade Mercury forthwith summon all the gods to an assembly, and make proclamation that, if any one absented himself from the council of the heavenly ones, he should be fined ten thousand pieces. The fear of this caused heaven's theatre promptly to be filled, and Jupiter, towering above the assembly on his high throne, thus gave utterance: "Ye gods whose names are written in the Muses' register, ye all know right well, methinks, that my own hands have reared the stripling whom you see before you. I have thought fit at last to set some curb upon the wild passions of his youthful prime. Long enough he has been the daily talk and scandal of all the world for his gallantries and his manifold vices. It is time that he should have no more occasion for his lusts; the wanton spirit of boyhood must be enchained in the fetters of wedlock. He has chosen a maiden, and robbed her of her honour. Let him keep her, let her be his for ever, let him enjoy his love and hold Psyche in his arms to all eternity." Then, turning to Venus, he added, "And thou, my daughter, be not downcast, and have no fear that thy son's marriage

with a mortal shall shame thy lofty rank and lineage. For I will see to it that it shall be no unworthy wedlock, but lawful and in accordance with civil law." Then straightway he bade Mercury catch up Psyche and bring her to heaven. This done, he offered her a goblet of ambrosia and said, "Psyche, drink of this and be immortal. Then Cupid shall never leave thine arms, but your marriage shall endure for ever."

24 Forthwith a rich nuptial banquet was set forth. The bridegroom reclined on the couch of honour holding Psyche to his heart. So, too, Jupiter lay by the side of Juno his spouse, and all the gods took their places in order. Then the shepherd boy that is his cupbearer served Jove with a goblet of nectar, which is the wine of the gods, and Liber served the others, while Vulcan cooked the dinner. The Hours made all things glow red with roses and other flowers, the Graces sprinkled balsam, and the Muses made melody with tuneful voices. Apollo accompanied his lyre with song, fair Venus danced with steps that kept time to the sweet music played by the orchestra she had provided; for the Muses chanted in chorus or blew the flute, while Satyr and young Pan played upon the pipe of reed. Thus did Psyche with all solemnity become Cupid's bride, and soon a daughter was born to them, and the name by which we name her is Pleasure.'

25 Such was the tale told to the captive maiden by that crazy drunken crone. And as I stood by I could not, by Hercules, refrain from grieving that I had

neither tablets nor pen wherewith I might note down so fair a story. And now, behold, the robbers returned laden with the spoil of some great battle. Not a few, and those the bravest of them, had been wounded. These were left at home to heal them of their wounds, the rest were eager to set forth to secure the remainder of their cargo, which was hidden, they said, in a certain cave. So after bolting a hurried meal, they led myself and the horse forth into the road, beating us with cudgels; for they purposed that we should carry their spoil for them. After we had traversed many a hill and many a winding pass, they brought us worn out with fatigue to a certain cave about evening. They took thence many things and loaded them upon our backs, and without giving us even the briefest space to recover from our weariness, led us off home again with all speed. Such was their haste that while they were thrashing me with repeated blows and thrusting me forward, they caused me to stumble and fall over a stone by the roadside. They continued none the less to rain blows upon me and compelled me to rise, though I scarce could do so, for I had gone lame of
26 the right leg and the left hoof. Then said one of them, 'How long are we to go on feeding this broken-backed ass, who has now added lameness to his other infirmities?' Another took up the strain: 'Aye! and he has brought our house bad luck! For never since he came here have we made any decent haul or got anything save wounds for our pains, while death has taken our bravest.' A third chimed in, 'As for me,

as soon as he has carried his pack home, loath though he be to do so, I will throw him over the cliff to feed the vultures. They will like him.'

While these gentlest of men were discussing my death, we had already reached home. For fear had made my hoofs wings. Our masters speedily removed our burdens, and without giving a moment's thought to our comfort, nor even to my execution, summoned their wounded comrades, who had remained behind, and hastened back with them. For they said they would carry the rest of the spoil themselves, since they were sick of our slowness. I was a prey to the liveliest anxieties as I contemplated the prospect of the death with which they had threatened me, and thus did I reason with myself: 'Lucius, why tarriest thou, or for what last woe dost thou wait? These robbers have doomed thee to death, aye and the most cruel of deaths! All is ready; no great effort is required. Thou seest those rocks hard by, set with sharp jutting points of flint, that will pierce thee and tear thee limb from limb, or ever thou come to the bottom. For though thy magic, thy wondrous magic, has given thee the face and labours of an ass, it hath cast about thee no thick ass's hide, but a skin as thin as that of any leech. Play the man, then, and seek safety while thou mayest. Thou hast a peerless chance of flight, while the robbers are away. Wilt thou fear thy sole guardian, an old hag half-dead already, whom thou mayest finish with one kick from thy foot, lame though it be? But whither, oh whither shalt thou fly, and who will harbour thee? Nay,

thy thoughts are but the foolish thoughts of an ass. For what traveller, finding one that may carry him, will not gladly take thee with him?'

27 Straightway with a vigorous effort I broke the thong that bound me, and sped away as fast as my four feet would carry me. But I failed to elude the eyes of that shrewd old woman, for they were keen as the eyes of any kite. When she saw me free, she summoned to her aid an audacity beyond that of her age and sex, caught the thong and struggled to pull me back and hale me home. But I, remembering the robbers' dark designs upon my life, had no pity for her, but driving the heels of my hind legs into her, I struck her to the ground. Notwithstanding, prostrate as she was, she clung tenaciously to the thong, so that she was dragged after me for some distance, as I strove to gallop away. Straightway she began with loud screams to summon stronger hands to her assistance. But her tears and clamour were all in vain, for there was no one there to bring her aid save only the captive girl. She ran out at the sound of these cries and beheld a truly memorable and dramatic spectacle, to wit, an old hag sustaining the rôle of Dirce, and trailed not behind a bull, but an ass. Then taking upon herself courage such as a man might have been proud to show, she dared a noble deed. Snatching the thong from the hands of the old woman, she prattled gently to me, recalled me from my headlong flight, mounted nimbly on my back and urged me once
28 more to a gallop. Moved not only by the desire to make good my own self-chosen flight, but also by the

hope of saving the maiden and, I may add, persuaded by the blows with which not infrequently she jogged my memory, I beat the ground with my four feet in a gallop that would not have disgraced a horse, and strove to whinny back an answer to the maid's sweet words. Nay more, under the pretence of scratching my back, I sometimes turned my neck sideways and kissed her dainty feet. At last she drew a deep sigh, and turning her careworn visage heavenward cried, 'Ye gods above, now at least aid me in my desperate peril! And thou too, cruel Fortune, cease from thy fury! Surely my woful torments have been enough to assuage thine anger. And thou, guardian of my liberty and safety, if thou wilt bear me safe to my home and restore me to my parents and my fair lover, what gratitude will I show thee! what honours heap on thee! with what food regale thee! First, I will neatly comb that mane of thine and deck it with the necklaces that I wore in my girlhood's days. I will curl thy forelock and part it neatly, and with ready diligence I will soften the hairs of thy tail, now so hard and clotted through lack of washing. Thou shalt be begemmed with balls of gold that shall shine upon thee like stars from heaven, and thou shalt go joyful and exultant in the processions of the people, and I will bring thee almonds and soft dainties in my silken apron and feed thee, oh my preserver! to thy heart's desire. And 29
further, beyond the daintiness of thy fare and the depth of thy repose and all the blessedness of thy daily life, thou shalt also win this glorious honour. For I will

so record my present good fortune and this dispensation of providence, that it shall bear the seal of everlasting remembrance. I will cause a picture to be painted of my flight of to-day, and will dedicate it as a sacred thing in the great hall of my home. Men shall throng to see it and shall tell of it in story, and the quaint tale of the princess who escaped from captivity on an ass's back shall be handed down to eternity by the pens of learned men. Thou too shalt be accounted one of the miracles of olden time and, taught by what thou hast done in very fact, we shall believe that Phrixus swam the seas on the ram's back, that Arion steered his dolphin and Europa rode her bull. Nay, in good sooth, if Jove once bellowed in the likeness of a bull, it may well be that within this ass of mine there is concealed the likeness of some man, or the semblance of a god.'

Such were the words with which the maiden addressed me, and it seemed she would never tire of repeating them, but ever and anon sighs mingled with her prayers. Meanwhile we came to a place where three roads met. She tugged at my halter and strove her best to turn me to the right, inasmuch as that way led to her parent's home. I, however, knew that the robbers had gone that way to fetch the rest of their booty, and offered stubborn resistance, and silently within my heart expostulated thus: "Unhappy girl, what dost thou? What wouldst thou? Why wilt thou hasten down the way to death? Why force my reluctant feet to follow thy will? For thou art going about to slay not thyself only, but me also. But while we strove to go in different directions

and disputed as though we had a suit at law about the boundaries of a piece of land, or rather, I should say, about a right of way, we suddenly found ourselves face to face with the robbers, who were returning laden with their spoils. They recognized us by the moonlight while we were still far off and greeted us with malicious laughter, while one of them hailed us as follows: 'Whither so fast in the dark? Are you not afraid of 30 the ghosts and goblins that haunt the dead of night? Were you going to pay a hurried visit to your parents, my virtuous young lady? Nay then, we will form an escort, that you may not be lonely, and will show you the way to your home.' Another, suiting his action to these words seized the thong, wrenched me round till my nose pointed homewards, and cudgelled me unsparingly with the knotted staff which he carried. Thereupon as I hastened back right unwillingly to the destruction that awaited me, I bethought me of the pain in my hoof, and began to limp with nodding head. But he who had dragged me back, cried, 'So then you are stumbling and faltering, are you, and your rotten feet cannot walk, though they knew well enough how to run away? Why, but a few minutes ago you would have beaten the winged Pegasus for speed.'

My comrade was still brandishing his cudgel and plying his good-humoured jests when we reached the outworks of the robbers' home. And lo and behold! there was the old hag hanging in a noose from the branch of a high cypress tree. They cut her down without delay, tied her up in the rope with which she had hung

herself, and hurled her over the precipice. Then, after casting the girl into chains, they precipitated themselves with all the ferocity of wild beasts upon the supper, on the preparation of which the unhappy old woman had expended her last energies.

31 While they were gorging with voracious gluttony, they began to deliberate how they should punish us and have their revenge. And since their proceedings were entirely lacking in order, there were great differences of opinion. One urged that the girl should be burnt alive, a second suggested that she should be thrown to the wild beasts, a third bade them hang her from a gibbet, a fourth advised that they should apply torture and tear the flesh from her limbs. The one point on which all their votes agreed was that in any case she must surely die. At last, when the uproar had subsided a little, one of them began to speak with measured utterance :—

'It would be out of keeping with the rule of our order, with our humanity as individuals, and with my own moderation, were I to permit you to indulge your fury to a degree out of all proportion and relation to the offence, to employ wild beasts, fire, crucifixion and torture to satisfy our vengeance, or indeed do anything to cause rapid extinction in the darkness of death. Wherefore, give ear to my counsels and grant the girl her life, but only such life as she deserves. You have none of you forgotten the doom that you passed long since on yonder ass ; he has always been lazy, and what is worse, a thorough glutton ; but now he has not only gone so far as to sham lameness, but he has also served

as agent and acccomplice in this girl's escape. I propose therefore that we resolve to cut his throat tomorrow and, after removing all his entrails, strip the girl whom he preferred to us and sew her naked in his belly's midst in such a manner that her face may protrude, but the rest of her body be held fast in the beast's embrace. Then let us stick up this ass of ours, with all this stuffing crammed inside him, on some jagged rock and expose him to the heat of the blazing sun. By these means both of them will endure all the torments that you 32
have so justly decreed. The ass will die as he has long deserved to do, while she will be gnawed by savage beasts when the worms tear her limbs; she will be scorched with burning fire, when the sun by his exceeding heat makes the beast's belly hot as flame; she will endure the agony of the gibbet, when the dogs and vultures tear forth her very bowels. Aye, and consider also her other woes and torments. She will dwell living within the belly of a dead beast; the heat will torture her with intolerable stench; she will dwindle away from mortal hunger and long fasting; and we may be sure that she will not slay herself with her own hands, for they will be fast bound.'

Hearing these words, the robbers voted, heart and hand, for his proposal. I heard it all with my vast ears and bewailed the corpse I should be upon the morrow.

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